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THE HEIMSKRINGLA ;

OR,

CHRONICLE

OF

THE KINGS OF NORWAY.

TRANSLATED

FROM THE ICELANDIC OF SNORRO STURLESON,

With a Preliminary Dissertation,

BY

SAMUEL LAING, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "A RESIDENCE IN NORWAY," "A TOUR IN SWEDEN,"  
"NOTES OF A TRAVELLER," ETC.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## P R E F A C E.

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IT is of importance to English history to have, in the English language, the means of judging of the social and intellectual state—of the institutions and literature—of a people who during 300 years bore an important, and for a great portion of that time a predominant part, not merely in the wars, but in the legislation of England; who occupied a very large proportion of the country, and were settled in its best lands in such numbers as to be governed by their own, not by Anglo-Saxon laws; and who undoubtedly must be the forefathers of as large a proportion of the present English nation as the Anglo-Saxons themselves, and of a much larger proportion than the Normans. These Northmen have not merely been the forefathers of the people, but of the institutions and character of the nation, to an extent not sufficiently considered by our historians. Civilised or not in comparison with the Anglo-Saxons, the Northmen must have left the influences of their character, institutions, barbarism or culture, among their own posterity. They occupied one third of all England for many generations, under their own Danish laws; and for half a century nearly, immediately previous to the Norman conquerors, they

held the supreme government of the country. It is doing good service in the fields of literature to place the English reader in a position to judge for himself of the influence which the social arrangements and spirit of these Northmen may have had on the national character, and free institutions which have grown up among us from elements planted by them, or by the Anglo-Saxons. This translation of Snorro Sturleson's Chronicle of the Kings of Norway will place the English reader in this position. He will see what sort of people these Northmen were who conquered and colonised the kingdoms of Northumberland, East Anglia, and other districts, equal to one third of all England at that time, and who lived under their own laws in that portion of England; and he will see what their institutions and social spirit were at home, whether these bear any analogy to what sprung up in England afterwards, and whether to them or to the Anglo-Saxon race we are most indebted for our national character and free constitution of government. The translator of Snorro Sturleson's Chronicle hopes, too, that his labour will be of good service in the fields of literature, by bringing before the English public a work of great literary merit,—one which the poet, or the reader for amusement, may place in his library, as well as the antiquary and reader of English history.

The translator can lay claim to no considerable knowledge of or great familiarity with the Icelandic. To get at the meaning and spirit of the text in any way was his main object; and where he met difficulties, which generally lay only in his own ignorance, he



spared no labour in collating the passages he was in doubt about with the Swedish translation in Peringskiöld's edition of the work, — with the Danish translation in the edition begun 1777 by Schöning under the auspices of the Danish government, and finished in 1826 by Thorlacius and Werlaug, in 6 vols. folio, — and with the excellent translation of it into Norse by M. Jacob Aal, published in quarto, in 1838, at Christiania. His notes and explanations are derived mostly from these sources, and principally from M. Jacob Aal's work: and where from his imperfect acquaintance with the Icelandic he found difficulties in the text, especially in the Scaldic poetry, which is often very obscure, he had recourse to M. Jacob Aal's translation as the best guide to the meaning and spirit of the original. That gentleman, as the last effort of a long life spent in commercial and literary pursuits, has translated Snorro Sturleson's Chronicle, and the Sagas of the succeeding times down to the end of Hakon Hakonsson's reign in 1263, for the use of the Norwegian peasantry. He remembered in his youth that these histories, although in the old and almost obsolete language of Peter Claussøn's translation of 1599, were a house-book read at the fireside of almost every peasant in Norway; and at a great expense he has published a new translation of them into Norse, and has placed the book, at a merely nominal price considering its magnificence, again within reach of his countrymen. In the present translation the object has been to make it, like M. Jacob Aal's, not merely a work for the antiquary, but for the ordinary reader of history,—for the common man.

The translator believes, also, that it opens up a new and rich field of character and incident, in which the reader who seeks amusement only will find much to interest him. The adventures, manners, mode of living, characters, and conversations of these sea-kings, are highly dramatic, in Snorro's work at least; and are told with a racy simplicity and truthfulness of language which the translator cannot flatter himself with having attained or preserved. All he can say for his work is, that any translation is better than none; and others may be stimulated by it to enter into the same course of study, who may do more justice to a branch of literature scarcely known among us.

Edinburgh, 1844.



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THE  
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PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE LITERATURE AND INTELLECTUAL CONDITION OF  
THE NORTHMEN.

SNORRO STURLESON'S Heimskringla is a work known to few English readers. Heimskringla—the world's circle—being the first prominent word of the manuscript that catches the eye, has been quaintly used by the northern antiquaries to designate the work itself. One may well imagine that the librarian, or the scholar, in the midst of the rolls and masses of parchments of the great public and private libraries of Copenhagen and Stockholm, has found his advantage in this simple way of directing an unlettered assistant to the skin he wishes to unfold. It is likely that the illuminated initial letters of ancient manuscripts, and of the early printed books, may have had their origin in a similar use or convenience in the monastic libraries of the middle ages. Snorro himself is guiltless of this pedantic conceit; for he calls his work the Saga or Story of the Kings of Norway. It is in reality a chronicle, or rather a connected series of memoirs, of kings and

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other personages, and of the events in which they have been engaged in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, England, and other countries, from those early ages in which mythology and history are undistinguishably blended together, down to the period nearly of Snorro Sturleson's own birth, to 1178. Snorro begins with Odin and the half-fabulous tales of the Yngling dynasty, and, showing more judgment than many of the modern Saga scholars and antiquaries, passes rapidly over these as an unavoidable introduction to authentic historical times and narratives. From the middle of the 9th century, from Halfdan the Black, who reigned from about the year 841 to about 863, down to Magnus Erlingsson, who reigned from about 1162 to 1184, he gives a continuous narrative of events and incidents in public and private life, very descriptive and characteristic of the men and manners of those times, — of the deeds of bold and bloody sea-kings, — of their cruises, of their forays, of their adventures, battles, conquests in foreign lands, — and of their home fireside lives also; and he gives, every now and then, very graphic delineations of the domestic manners, way of thinking, acting, and living in those ages; very striking traits of a semi-barbarous state of mind, in which rapacity, cruelty, and bloody ferocious doings, are not unfrequently lightened up by a ray of high and generous feeling; and he gives too, every now and then, very natural touches of character, and scenes of human action, and of the working of the human mind, which are, in truth, highly dramatic. In rapid narrative of the stirring events of the wild Viking life, — of its vicissitudes, adventures, and exploits, — in extraordinary yet not improbable incidents and changes in the career of individuals, — in touches true to nature, — and in the admirable management of his story, in which episodes, apparently the most unconnected with his subject, come in by and by, at the

right moment, as most essential parts of it,—Snorro Sturleson stands as far above Ville Hardouin, Joinville, or Froissart, as they stand above the monkish chroniclers who preceded them. His true seat in the Valhalla of European literature is on the same bench—however great the distance between—on the same bench with Shakspeare, Carlyle, and Scott, as a dramatic historian; for his Harald Haarfager, his Olaf Tryggvesson, his Olaf the Saint, are in reality great historical dramas, in which these wild energetic personages, their adherents and their opponents, are presented working, acting, and speaking before you.

This high estimate of the literary merit of Snorro Sturleson's work will scarcely pass unquestioned by English readers,—accustomed indeed to hear of the Anglo-Saxon literature, language, and institutions, as of great importance to the historian and antiquary, and as a study necessary for those who wish to become perfectly acquainted with our own, but who would never discover from the pages of Hume, or of any other of our historical writers, that the northern pagans who, in the ninth and tenth centuries, ravaged the coasts of Europe, sparing neither age, sex, nor condition—respecting neither churches, monasteries, nor their inmates—conquering Normandy, Northumberland (then reckoned, with East-Anglia, equal to one third of all England)—and, under Swein and Canute the Great, conquering and ruling over the whole of England,—were a people possessing any literature at all, or any laws, institutions, arts, or manners connecting them with civilised life. Our historians have confined themselves for information entirely to the records and chronicles of the Anglo-Saxon monks, who, from their convent walls, saw with horror and dismay the bands of these bloodthirsty pagans roving through the country, ravaging, burning, and murdering; and who naturally represent them as the



most ferocious and ignorant of barbarians, and without any tincture of civilisation. Our historians and their readers are apt to forget altogether that, pagan and barbarian as these Danes or Northmen of the 9th and 10th centuries undoubtedly were, they were the same people, only in a different stage of civilisation, as the Anglo-Saxons themselves, and were in the 10th century, in their social state, institutions, laws, religion, and language, what the Anglo-Saxons had been in the 5th century, when they first landed on the Isle of Thanet. They forget, too, that the introduction of Christianity, and with it of the Latin language, and of the learning which had a reference only to the church, and the introduction of social arrangements, establishments, and ideas of polity and government, cast in one mould for all countries of Christendom by the Romish church, had during these five centuries altered, exhausted, and rendered almost effête, the original spirit and character of Anglo-Saxon social institutions. They do not sufficiently consider the powerful moral influence of this fresh infusion, in the 10th century, of the same spirit, from the same original source, upon the character, ideas, and even forms of government and social arrangements of the whole English population in the subsequent generations, and through them upon the whole of modern society. They do not sufficiently appreciate the social effects of the settlements of these Northmen in England immediately previous to the Norman conquest, when for four generations of kings, viz. Swein, Canute, Harald, and Hardicanute, they had been sole masters of the country, and had possessed and held under their own Danish laws, for many previous generations, what was reckoned equal to one third of all England. The renovation of Anglo-Saxon institutions, the revival of principles and social spirit which were exhausted in the old Anglo-Saxon race, may be



traced to this fresh infusion from the cognate northern people. This subject is very curious and important.

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Two nations only have left permanent impressions of their laws, civil polity, social arrangements, spirit, and character, on the civilised communities of modern times — the Romans, and the handful of northern people from the countries beyond the Elbe which had never submitted to the Roman yoke, who, issuing in small piratical bands from the 5th to the 10th century, under the name of Saxons, Danes, Northmen; plundered, conquered, and settled on every European coast from the White Sea to Sicily. Under whatever name, Goths, Visigoths, Franks, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, or Northmen, these tribes appear to have been all of one original stock, — to have been one people in the spirit of their religion, laws, institutions, manners, and languages, only in different stages of civilisation, and the same people whom Tacitus describes. But in Germany the laws and institutions derived from the Roman power, or formed under it after the Roman empire became Christianized, had buried all the original principles of Teutonic arrangements of society as described by Tacitus; and in France the name was almost all that remained of Frank derivation. All the original and peculiar character, spirit, and social institutions of the first inundation of this Germanic population, had become diluted and merged under the church government of Rome, — when a second wave of populations from the same pagan north inundated again, in the 9th and 10th centuries, the shores of Christendom. Wheresoever this people from beyond the pale and influence of the old Roman empire, and of the later church empire of Rome, either settled, mingled, or marauded, they have left permanent traces in society of their laws, institutions, character, and spirit. Pagan and barbarian as they were, they seem to have carried with them something more natural,

something more suitable to the social wants of man, than the laws and institutions formed under the Roman power. What traces have we in Britain of the Romans? A few military roads, and doubtful sites of camps, posts, and towns,—a few traces of public works, and all indicating a despotic military occupation of the country, and none a civilised condition of the mass of the inhabitants,—alone remain in England to tell the world that here the Roman power flourished during four hundred years.

In every province of the ancient Roman empire, even in Italy itself, the remains of Roman power are of the same character—whether those remains be of material objects, as edifices, public works, roads, temples, statues—or of moral objects, as law, government, religion, and social arrangement; and that character is of a hard iron despotism, in which all human rights, all individual existence in wellbeing, all the objects for which man enters into social union with his fellow-man, are disregarded in favour of ruling classes or establishments in the social body, noble, military, or clerical. The Saxon occupation of England lasted for a similar period to the Roman, for about four hundred years. This first wave of the flood of northern populations has left among us traces of laws and institutions, and of a social character and spirit, in which many outlines of freedom and of just principles of social union are distinguishable; and left the influences on the social body of ideas, manners, language, which still exist. But these traces were nearly obliterated, and it is not to be denied that their influence on society was effête,—that in Anglo-Saxon England, as in the rest of Europe, all social arrangement, character, and spirit were assuming one shape and hue under the pressure of superstition, and of the Roman power, institutions, and ascendancy, revived through the influence of the church of Rome which had been in full operation for



four centuries and a half, assimilating every thing to one form and principle,—when the second wave of the northern populations, the Danes or Northmen, came, under Swein and Canute the Great, to invigorate and renew the social elements left by the first. The moral power of this people — the Anglo-Saxons and Northmen being essentially the same people — has left deeper impressions on society, and of a nobler character, than the despotic material power of the Romans. It is in activity at the present hour in European society, introducing into every country more just ideas than those which grew up amidst the ruins of the Roman empire, of the social relations of the governing and the governed. The history of modern civilisation resolves itself, in reality, into the history of the moral influences of these two nations. All would have been Roman in Europe at this day in principle and social arrangement, — Europe would have been, like Russia or Turkey, one vast den of slaves, with a few rows in its amphitheatre of kings, nobles, and churchmen, raised above the dark mass of humanity beneath them, if three boats from the north of the Elbe had not landed at Ebbsfleet in the Isle of Thanet fourteen hundred years ago, and been followed by a succession of similar boat expeditions of the same people, marauding, conquering, and settling, during six hundred years, viz. from 449 to 1066. All that men hope for of good government and future improvement in their physical and moral condition — all that civilised men enjoy at this day of civil, religious, and political liberty — the British constitution, representative legislature, the trial by jury, security of property, freedom of mind and person, the influence of public opinion over the conduct of public affairs, the Reformation, the liberty of the press, the spirit of the age — all that is or has been of value to man in modern times as a member of society, either in Europe or in the New



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World, may be traced to the spark left burning upon our shores by these northern barbarians.

Our English writers and readers direct their attention too exclusively to the Anglo-Saxon branch of this great Teutonic race of people, and scarcely acknowledge the social influence of the admixture of their Danish conquerors, — of that fresh infusion in the 10th century, from the same original stock, of the original spirit, character, and social institutions. The schoolman and the political antiquary find it classical or scholarlike to trace up to obscure intimations, in the treatise of Tacitus on the ancient Germans, the origin of parliaments, trial by jury, and all other free institutions, assuming somewhat gratuitously that the seafaring Saxons, who, four hundred years after the days of Tacitus, crossed the sea from the countries north of the Elbe, and conquered England, were identical in laws and social institutions with the forest Germans on the Rhine whom Tacitus describes; and forgetting that a much nearer and more natural source of all the social elements they are tracing back to the forests of Germany in the time of Agricola, was to be found in full vigour among the people who had conquered and colonised the kingdoms of Northumberland and East Anglia, reckoned equal then to one third of England, and had held them for several generations, and who conquered and ruled over all England for nearly half a century immediately previous to its final conquest by their own Norman kinsmen. The spirit, character, and national vigour of the old Anglo-Saxon branch of this people, had evidently become extinct under the influence and pressure of the church of Rome upon the energies of the human mind. This abject state of the mass of the old Christianised Anglo-Saxons, is evident from the trifling resistance they made to the small piratical bands of Danes or Northmen who infested and settled on their coasts. It is evident

that the people had neither energy to fight, nor property, laws, or institutions to defend, and were merely serfs on the land of nobles, or of the church, who had nothing to lose by a change of masters. It is to the renewal of the original institutions, social condition, and spirit of Anglo-Saxon society, by the fresh infusion of these Danish conquerors into a very large proportion of the whole population in the 11th century — and not to the social state of the forest Germans in the 1st century — that we must look for the actual origin of our national institutions, character, and principles of society, and for that check of the popular opinion and will upon arbitrary rule which grew up by degrees, showing itself even in the first generation after William the Conqueror, and which slowly but necessarily produced the English constitution, laws, institutions, and character. The same seed was no doubt sown by the old Anglo-Saxons, and by the Northmen — for they were originally the same people; but the seed of the former had perished under Romish superstition and church influence, during five centuries in which the mind and property in every country were subjugated to the priesthood whose home was at Rome; and the seed of the latter flourished, because it was fresh from a land in which all were proprietors with interests at stake, and accustomed, although in a very rude and violent way, to take a part, by Things, or assemblies of the people, in all the acts of their government.

Some German, Anglo-American, and English writers, with a silly vanity, and a kind of party feeling, claim a pre-eminence of the Anglo-Saxon race among the European people of our times, in the social, moral, political, and religious elements of society, and even in physical powers — in intellect and in arms. This is the echo of a bray first heard in the forgotten controversy about the authenticity of Ossian's Poems.



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Pinkerton contended stoutly for the natural intellectual superiority of the Gothic over the Celtic race, insisting that no intellectual achievement, not even the almost physical achievement of the conquest of a country by force of arms, was ever accomplished by Celts. The black hair, dark eye, and dusky skin of the small-sized Celt, were considered by those philosophers to indicate an habitation for souls less gifted than those which usually dwell under the yellow hair, blue eye, and fair skin of the bulky Goth. This conceit has been revived of late in Germany, and in America; and people talk of the superiority of the Gothic, Germanic, or Anglo-Saxon race, as if no such people had ever existed as the Romans, the Spaniards, the French — no such men as Cæsar, Buonaparte, Cicero, Montesquieu, Cervantes, Ariosto, Raphael, Michael Angelo. If the superiority they claim were true, it would be found not to belong at all to that branch of the one great northern race which is called Teutonic, Gothic, Germanic, or Anglo-Saxon — for that branch in England was, previous to the settlements of the Danes or Northmen in the 10th and 11th centuries, and is at this day throughout all Germany, morally and socially degenerate, and all distinct and distinguishing spirit or nationality in it dead; but to the small cognate branch of the Northmen or Danes, who, between the 9th and 12th centuries brought their paganism, energy, and social institutions, to bear against, conquer, mingle with, and invigorate the priest-ridden, inert descendants of the old Anglo-Saxon race. It was not, perhaps, so much an overwhelming number of these Northmen, as the new spirit they brought with them, that mixed with and changed the social elements of the countries they settled in. A spark will set fire to a city, if it find stuff to kindle. This stuff was in human nature; and these Northmen, a handful as they were of mere barbarians, did kindle



it with their spark of a free social existence, in which all men had property or interests, and a right to a voice in the affairs of their government and in the enactment of their laws. It must be admitted, whatever we think of the alleged superiority of the Teutonic race over the Celtic or Slavonic, that this Northern branch has been more influential than the older Anglo-Saxon branch of their common race on the state of modern society in Europe. We have only to compare England and the United States of America with Saxony, Prussia, Hanover, or any country calling itself of ancient Germanic or Teutonic descent, to be satisfied that from whatever quarter civil, religious, and political liberty, independence of mind, and freedom in social existence may have come, it was not from the banks of the Rhine, or the forests of Germany.

The social condition, institutions, laws, and literature of this vigorous, influential branch of the race, have been too much overlooked by our historians and political philosophers; and this work of Snorro Sturleson gives us very different impressions of this branch, in its pagan and barbarous state, from the impressions which the contemporary Anglo-Saxon writers, and all our historians on their authority, afford us. Let us first look at their literature, and compare it with that of the Anglo-Saxon of the same ages.

Our early historians, from the Venerable Bede downwards, however accurate in the events and dates they record, and however valuable for this accuracy, are undeniably the dullest of chroniclers. They were monks, ignorant of the world beyond their convent walls, recording the deaths of their abbots, the legends of their founders, and the miracles of their sainted brethren, as the most important events in history; the facts being stated without exercise of judgment, or inquiry after truth, the fictions with a dull credulity unenlivened by a single gleam of genius. The

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*Historia Ecclesiastica venerabilis Bedæ*, and Asser's *Life of Alfred*, embrace the earlier portion of the same period, viz. the latter half of the 8th century, of which the first Sagas of the *Heimskringla* of Snorro Sturleson treat. The *Saxon Chronicle* is a dry record of facts and dates, ending about 1155, or about the same period (within twenty years) at which the *Heimskringla* ends. Matthew Paris begins his history about 1057, and carries it down to about 1250, which is supposed to be about the period of his own death. He was a contemporary of Snorro, who was born in 1178, and murdered in Iceland in 1241. Matthew Paris was no unlettered, obscure monk. He was expressly selected by the Pope, in 1248, for a mission to Norway to settle some disputes among the monks of the order of Saint Benedict, in the monastery of Nidarholm, or Monkholm, in the diocese of Dronthiem; and after accomplishing the object of his mission he returned to his monastery at St. Albans. It is not to be denied that all this connected series of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman history, from the dissolution of the Roman empire in Britain in the middle of the 5th century down to the middle of the 13th century, although composed by such writers of the Anglo-Saxon population as Bede and Matthew Paris, men the most eminent of their times for learning and literary attainments among the Anglo-Saxons and their descendants, is of the most unmitigated dulness, considered as literary or intellectual production; and that all the historical compositions of the old Anglo-Saxon branch during those eight centuries, either in England or in Germany, are, with few if any exceptions, of the same leaden character. They are also, with the exception of the *Saxon Chronicle*, and of the translation into Anglo-Saxon of Bede by the great King Alfred, all, or almost all, composed in the Latin tongue, not in the native national tongue of the country in which they



were composed and of which they treat; — composed not for the people, and as part of the literature of the country, but for a tribe of cloistered scholars spread over the country, yet cut off by their profession from all community of interests, feelings, or views, with the rest of the nation; a class centralised in Rome, and at home only in her church establishment. It was their literature, not the literature of the nation around them, that these writers composed; and its influence, and even all knowledge of its existence, was confined to their own class. It was not until the 13th century that Ville Hardouin composed his *Memoirs* in the vernacular tongue of his countrymen; and he and Joinville, who wrote about the end of the 13th century, are considered the earliest historical writers who emancipated history from the Latinity and dulness of the monkish chroniclers.

When we turn from the heavy Latin records of the Anglo-Saxon monks to the accounts given of themselves in their own language, during the very same ages, by the Northmen, we are startled to find that these wild bloody sea-kings, worshippers of Thor, Odin, and Frigga, and known to us only from the Anglo-Saxon monks as ferocious pagans, overthrowing kings, destroying churches and monasteries, ravaging countries with fire and sword, and dragging the wretched inhabitants whom they did not murder into slavery, surpassed the cognate Saxon people they were plundering and subduing, in literature as much as in arms — that poetry, history, laws, social institutions and usages, many of the useful arts, and all the elements of civilisation, and freedom, were existing among them in those ages in much greater vigour than among the Anglo-Saxons themselves. We cling to the early impression given us by Hume, and all our best historians, upon the authority of our monkish chroniclers, that these pagan Danes or Northmen were

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barbarians of an almost brutal ignorance and ferocity, without a spark of civilisation or literature. We see that these Vikings, or marauders from the North, were bloody, daring, capable of incredible enterprises and exertion, and of incredible outrages and cruelty when successful—and that a few hundreds of them landing from row-boats, could daunt and subdue extensive tracts of country, and all their inhabitants; yet we do not draw the natural conclusion from these facts, that this terrifying, conquering few must have been superior in mental power, energy, and vigour of action, to the daunted, conquered many. All conquests that history tells of will be found to resolve themselves into the superior mental powers of the conquerors. The Romans conquered nations armed in the same way as themselves, by superior tactics, discipline, military arrangement, and perseverance; that is, by superior mental power applied to the same material means. The moderns in America, India, and in Europe, conquer by the superiority of fire-arms, or of what belongs to the efficiency of fire-arms, in a campaign. This too is the superiority of mental power in the invention, construction, or application of material means. The Northmen, armed with the same weapons as the inhabitants of England, men of the same physical powers as the Anglo-Saxons, land in small piratical bands, altogether insignificant in numbers, on the coasts of England and France, and terrify, paralyse, and conquer, as the Spaniards with their fire-arms and horses, did in Mexico or Peru. What is this but the superiority of mind, of intellectual power, energy, spirit, over the inert passive Anglo-Saxon inhabitants, tamed down by the church influence and superstition of five centuries into a state of listless existence, without spirit or feeling as a nation, or confidence and self-dependence as individuals, and looking for aid from saints, prayers, and miracles?

It was the human mind in a state of barbarous energy and action, and with the vitality of freedom, conquering the human mind in a state of slavish torpidity and superstitious lethargy. The paucity of numbers of these Danes or Northmen was not compensated by any superiority of the weapons, discipline, or tactics they used; but they were men fighting to acquire property by plunder or conquest, who had laws and institutions which secured to them its enjoyment; and they had as opponents only a population of serfs or labourers, with no property in the soil, no interests to fight for, nothing to lose or to defend but what they could save as well by flying or submitting as by fighting.

It might be surmised by a philosophic reader of the history of those times, that all the vigorous action and energy of mind of these barbarous Danes or Northmen could not be showing itself only in deeds of daring enterprise abroad,—that some of it must be expending itself at home, and in other arts and uses than those of a predatory warfare. It will not, at least, surprise such a reader that some of this mental power was applied at home in attempts, however rude, at history and poetry; but he will be surprised to find that those attempts surpass, both in quality and quantity, all that can be produced of Anglo-Saxon literature during the same ages, either in the Anglo-Saxon language or in the Latin. These literary attempts also, or, to give them their due title, this body of literature, is remarkably distinguished from that of the Anglo-Saxons, or of any other people of the same period, by being composed entirely in the native national tongue, and intended to instruct or amuse an audience of the people; and not in a dead language, and intended merely for the perusal of an educated class in the monasteries. With the exception of Theodoric the Monk, who wrote in Latin in the time of King Swerrer,



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viz. between 1177 and 1202, a history of the kings of Norway down to the end of the reign of Sigurd the Crusader in 1130, and who appears to have been a foreigner, all the literary attempts among this northern branch of the one great race, during the five centuries in which the other branch, the Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon, was confining all intellectual communication in history or poetry to Latin, and within the walls of the cloisters, were composed in the vernacular tongue of the country, intelligible to, and indeed altogether addressed to, the people of all classes. This singular instance in Europe of a national literature diffused among a barbarous and rude people, who had not even received the civilisation which accompanies the Christian religion under every form, before the beginning of the twelfth century, who were pagans in short fully five hundred years after every other part of Europe was, with the exception of some districts perhaps on the coasts of the Baltic, fully Christianised, has not been sufficiently considered by historians in estimating the influence of literature on national mind, character, and social arrangement. To the influence of this rude national literature we probably owe much of what we now pride ourselves upon as the noblest inheritance from our forefathers,—that national energy, activity, independence of mind, and value for civil and political freedom, which distinguish the population of England from that of all other countries, and have done so ever since the admixture of the Northmen with the old Anglo-Saxons. It may be said that the influence of sagas or songs, of the literature, such as it may be, upon the spirit and character of a people, is overstated, and that it is but a fond exaggeration, at any rate, to dignify with the title of a national, influential literature, the rude traditional tales and ballads of a barbarous pagan population. But a nation's literature is its breath of life, without



which a nation has no existence, is but a congregation of individuals. However low the literature may be in its intellectual merit, it will nationalise the living materials of a population into a mass animated with common feeling. During the five centuries in which the Northmen were riding over the seas, and conquering wheresoever they landed, the literature of the people they overcame was locked up in a dead language, and within the walls of monasteries. But the Northmen had a literature of their own, rude as it was; and the Anglo-Saxon race had none, none at least belonging to the people. The following list will show the reader that in the five centuries between the days of the Venerable Bede and those of Matthew Paris, that is from the 9th to the end of the 13th century, the northern branch of the common race was not destitute of intellectuality, notwithstanding all their paganism and barbarism, and had a literature adapted to their national spirit, and wonderfully extensive. The list is taken from that given by Thormod Torfæus, in his “Series Dynastarum et Regum Daniæ,” from that given by Müller in his “Sagabibliothek,” and from that of Biorn Haldorson. The notes on the date and contents are extracted chiefly from Müller’s work. The words *historical* or *fabulous* indicate only that the work is founded on facts apparently, or is a work of fiction.

- Adonius Saga* (of a king and duke in Syria). Fabulous.  
*Alafleks Saga* (of a son of a King Richard of England). Fabulous.  
*Amloda Saga* (of Hamlet, freely translated from Saxo). Fabulous.  
*Alexander Mikla Saga* (of Alexander the Great, translated by Bishop Brand Johnson, by order of Hakon Hakonson). Historical.  
*Andra Rimur*,—rhymes of or concerning Andreas.  
*Ans Saga* (of An Bueswinger). Mythologico-Historical.  
*Asmundar ok Tryggve Rimur*.  
*Arna Biskups Saga* (of Bishop Arne, flourished 1260). Historical.  
*Arans Saga Hiorleifs sonar* (of Aran son of Hiorleif). Historical.

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*Amicus ok Amilius Rimur* (of Amicus and Amilius — belongs to the story of the Seven Wise Men). Fabulous.

*Bandamanna Saga* (of the Confederates — account of an Icelandic law process in the eleventh century). Local History.

*Bardar Saga Snæfells* (of Bard, son of King Dumo, a giant). Fabulous.

*Barlaams Saga*.

*Befus Saga* (of Bevis, son of an English Count Ginar). Fabulous.

*Biørns Saga Hitdæla Kappa* (of Biørn of Hitdale, a contemporary of King Olaf the Saint). Historical.

*Blomstrvalla Saga* (a translation from the German by Biørn, in Hakon Hakonson's time. The name Blomstrvalla is from a place near Alexandria, where the scene is laid).

*Bose ok Herauts Saga* (of Bose and Heraut). Fabulous.

*Bua Saga* (of Bue Andredsson). Fabulous.

*Bærings Saga fagra* (of the beautiful Bœring, a Saxon king). Fabulous.

*Brodhelga Saga* (of a chief who died about 974). Historical.

*Brandkrossa Thattr* (traits of Helge Asbiørnson and Helge Droplauga's sons). Fabulous.

*Bodvars Biarka Saga*. Historical.

*Breta Sögur* (Saga of Wales, called Breta and Bretland; and the parts of England occupied by the Anglo-Saxons was called Saxland by the Northmen. This is from Geoffrey of Monmouth's work).

*Damusta Saga* (of a Damusta who killed Ion, king of a country south of France, and became king of Greece). Fabulous.

*Draplaugar Sona Saga* (of the sons Helga and Grim of Draplaug). History and fable mixed; the period, the tenth century.

*Dinus Saga Dromblata* (of Dionysius the Proud, son of King Ptolemy, in Egypt).

*Drauma Jons Saga* (of John the Dreamer and Earl Henry). Fabulous.

*Egils Saga Eindhendta* (of Egil the One-handed, and Asmund). Fabulous.

*Egils Saga Skallagrim's sonar* (of Egil, son of Skallagrim). Historical; period from the middle of the ninth to the end of the tenth century.

*Elis Saga* (of Elis or Julius and Rosamund). Translated from the French, 1226, by Monk Robert, by order of Hakon Hakonson.

*Edda Sæmunds* (the elder Edda). Mythological.

*Edda Snorros* (the younger Edda). Mythological.

*Eric Rauda Saga* (of Eric Red, who discovered Greenland, and Vinland or America). Historical; period from near the end of the ninth to beginning of the tenth century.

*Eyrbyggja Saga* (of Thorgrim, whose forefather, Rolf, came from the Isle of Moster in the north of Norway, and first planted Iceland with people from his island (*eyrbyggja*, isle-settlers) to escape Harald Haarfager). Historical; period from the first colonising Iceland to the middle of the eleventh century.



*Eric's Saga Vidforla* (of Eric the Wanderer, who goes in search of the land of immortality.) Mythological.

*Edwardar Saga hins helga* (of Saint Edward of England).

*Fertrams Saga ok Plato* (of Fertram and Plato, sons of King Arthur). Fabulous.

*Finaboga Ramma Saga* (of Finabog the Strong). Fable and history, from middle of tenth to eleventh century.

*Flateyar Annall* (the Flatö Codex, so called from the Isle of Flatö in Breidafjord in Iceland, in which the manuscript was discovered in 1650. The Annals end in 1395. It contains many Saga transcribed into it, and is considered a most important historical collection. The MSS. was written by Ion Thordsen, priest, and Magnus Thorhalsen, priest, between the years 1387 and 1395). Historical.

*Færeyinga Saga* (of the Færo Islands). Historical.

*Floamanna Saga* (of a Thorgill and his ancestors, original settlers in Iceland, and of his adventures in Greenland. Thorgill died 1033). Historical.

*Flores ok Leo* (of Flores and Leo).

*Florents Saga Fraka Konungs* (of Florent King of the Franks, invented by Master Simon in Lyons).

*Fridthiofs Saga* (of Fridthiof the Bold). This beautiful story has been the groundwork of several poetic and dramatic imitations, of which Bishop Tegner's, in Swedish, has been translated into English.

*Flores Konungs Saga ok Sona hans* (of King Floris and his sons).

*Gibbons Saga* (of Gibbon, son of the French king William).

*Gaunga Hrolfs Saga* (of Rolf Ganger, the conqueror of Normandy). Historical.

*Gisla Saga Secos sonar* (of Gisle the son of Secos. Events of the tenth century in Iceland). Historical.

*Gretters Saga sterka* (of Gretter the Strong). Adventures, fabulous and historical, mixed, of Gretter and his forefathers, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries.

*Guimars Saga* (of Guimar, an English knight).

*Gudmundar Biskups Saga* (of Bishop Gudmund); being part of the third book of the Sturlunga Saga, or account of the Sturlung family, which ends 1264, and of which the first books are supposed to have been written 1201.

*Grænlandinga Thattr* (events in Greenland from 1122, and a list of nine bishops and fifteen churches). Historical.

*Gunnars Saga fífls* (of Gunnar the Idiot). Fabulous.

*Gunlaugs Saga Ormstungu* (of Gunlaug the Serpent-tongued). Historical; the period about 1006.

*Gunnors Saga Thedbrand bana* (of Gunnor who killed Thedbrand). Historical; supposed to be written about the end of the twelfth century.

*Gullthoris Saga* (of Gold Thorro, or Torskfindinga Saga). Fabulous.

*Grim's ok Hialmers rimur* (rhymes concerning Grim and Hialmer).



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- Halfs Saga* (of Half, who, if not altogether a fabulous personage, lived about the eighth century; or in the sixth, according to others).
- Halfdanar Saga Brannfostre* (of Halfdan, foster-son of Bran). Fabulous.
- Halfdanar Saga Eystein sonar* (of Halfdan, son of Eystein). Fabulous.
- Haraldz Saga Hringsbana* (of Harald, who slew Hring).
- Hrolf Kraka Saga* (a collection of Sagas, some historical, some fabulous).
- Hemings Saga* (of Heming, a fabulous personage of Olaf the Saint's time).
- Hervarar Saga* (of Hervar). Mythological.
- Hialmthers ok Olvers Saga* (of Hialmther and Olver). Fabulous.
- Hogne ok Hedins Saga*. Mythological.
- Holmverra Saga* (of one Hord). Mixed fable and historical fact regarding Iceland.
- Hrafnkels Goda Saga*. Historical; of Harald Haarfager's times.
- Hrimr ok Tryggve rimur*.
- Hralf Saga Gotreks sonar* (of Hralf, son of Gotrek). Mythological.
- Hrolfs Saga Skugga fífls* (of Hrolf, son of Skugga the Idiot).
- Hromundar Saga Grips sonar*. Fabulous.
- Hungr-vaka* (the Hunger-waking is the name of a Saga of the Bishops of Skalholt down to 1178; the author supposing it would raise an appetite for more).
- Hönse Thoris Saga* (of Thorer the hen-merchant). Historical.
- Hrafn's Saga Swinbiornar sonar* (of Hrafn, son of Swinbiorn).
- Hallfredar Saga Vandræda Skalldz* (of Halfred "the scald, desperate or difficult to deal with," who lived in King Olaf the Saint's time). Historical.
- Hakonar Konungs Saga Hakonar sonar* (of King Hakon Hakonson, who was born 1203, and died 1274). Historical; by Sturle Thordson, a contemporary.
- Hugo Scaplars Saga* (Hugo of the Scapulary). Fabulous.
- Hakonar Saga Hareks sonar* (of Hakon the son of Harek).
- Hakonar Saga Iverson sonar* (of Hakon Iverson). Historical.
- Haralds Rimur Kvingiarna* (rhymes of or concerning Harald the Woman-lover.)
- Hermodar Rimur* (rhymes of Hermod).
- Islandinga Bok Ara Froda* (Book of Iceland—concerning the first colonisation of Iceland, the introduction of Christianity, &c., usually called Are Frode Schedæ; written about 1120). Historical.
- Isfirdinga Saga* (of a division of Iceland called Isfirding). Historical.
- Jarlmans Saga* (of Jarlman and Herman). Fabulous.
- Illugo Saga Gridar fostra* (of Illugo, foster-son of Grida). Fabulous.
- Jokuls Saga Bue sonar* (of Jokul, son of Bue). Fabulous.
- Jomsvikinga Saga* (of the Vikings of Jomsburg, in the island of Wollen). Historical.
- Jans Biskups Saga* (of John the Bishop, viz. Jon Ogmundson, who died 1121, bishop of Skalholt). Historical.
- Ivents Saga*. Fabulous; translated from the French by order of Hakon Hakonson.
- Ions Saga Leiksveins* (of John the Juggler). Fabulous.

*Jonales Rimur* (rhymes of Jonales).

*Ions Saga Baptistæ* (of John the Baptist).

*Ions Saga Gudspialla mana* (of Saint John the Evangelist).

*Karlamagnus Saga* (of Charlemagne).

*Ketils Saga* (of Ketil Hæng and Grim Lodiskins). Fable and history.

*Knytlinga Saga* (of the Danish kings of the Canute dynasty, from Harald Gormson to Canute VII., supposed to be by Olaf Thordson, who died 1259). Historical.

*Konrads Saga Keysara sonar* (of Konrad, son of the Emperor).

*Kormaks Saga* (of Kormak the Scald). Fable and history.

*Kroka Refs Saga* (of Ref the Cunning). Fabulous.

*Klarus Saga Keysara sonar* (of Clarus, son of the Emperor). Fabulous.

*Kotler Draumr* (the Dream of Cotla).

*Kristus Saga* (of the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, from 981 to 1000). Historical.

*Kirialax Saga* (of the Emperor Alexis, viz. Kurios Alexis; but this is a fabulous emperor).

*Kallinius Rimur* (rhymes of Callinius).

*Kraks Spa* (Prophecy of Krak).

*Landnama Bok* (events in Iceland from the original settlement in the ninth to the end of the tenth century; with names of the first settlers, and of their lands, to the number of about 3000 names of persons, and 1400 of places; supposed to have been written in the last half of the thirteenth century). Historical.

*Langfidgatal* (series of dynasties and kings in the North). Historical.

*Laxdæla Saga* (of the descendants of Auda, who settled in Laxdale). Historical.

*Liosvetninga Saga* (Lives of the Descendants of Thorgier and Gudmund, and their own Lives, between the middle of the tenth and end of the twelfth century). Historical; written about the end of the twelfth century.

*Laurentius Biskups Saga* (of Bishop Laurence, who was born 1267). Historical, by a contemporary.

*Mabels Sterku Rimer* (rhymes of or concerning Mabel the Strong).

*Maria Saga* (of Mary, viz. the Virgin).

*Margaretor Saga* (of Margaret and Sigurd, in Magnus the Good's time).

*Magus Jarls Saga* (of Earl Magus, or Marus, in Saxland). Fabulous.

*Mirmants Saga* (of Mirmant, a king in Sicily). Fabulous.

*Magnus Saga Orkneya Jarls* (of Saint Magnus, Earl of Orkney, who was killed 1110). Historical.

*Mottuls Saga* (of the magic cloak at the court of King Arthur).

*Nials Saga* (of Nial). Historical; and supposed to be written by Sæmund Frode, in the 11th century.

*Nikulass Saga leikara* (of Nicolas the Juggler, son of King Faustus of Hungary). Fabulous.

*Nitida Frægn Saga* (of the celebrated Nitida, daughter of a Frank king Richard). Fabulous.

*Nikulass Saga Erksbiskups* (of Nicholas, Archbishop of Lucca).



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*Ærverodde Saga* (of Odde the Archer; literally, Arrow-Odde). Fabulous.

*Olver Rimur* (rhymes of Olver).

*Petr's Saga Postula* (of Peter the Apostle).

*Partalopa Saga*.

*Polistutors Rimur*.

*Parcevals Saga* (of Parceval, one of King Arthur's worthies). Fabulous.

*Pals Biskups Saga* (of Bishop Paul, the seventh bishop of Skalholt, who died in 1211; supposed by a contemporary). Historical.

*Ragners Saga Lodbroker* (of Ragner Lodbrok). History with fable.

*Reinalds ok Rosa Rimur* (rhymes of Ronald and Rosa).

*Sigurdr Saga Thogla* (of Sigurd the Silent, son of King Lodver in Saxland). Fabulous.

*Sigrgardz Saga frækna* (of a king of Tartary, Sigurd the Bold). Fabulous.

*Saulus Saga ok Nicanors* (of Saul and Nicanor, two foster brothers, one of Galatia, and one of Italy). Fabulous.

*Sturlunga Saga* (of the family of Sturle, of which Snorro Sturleson was a descendant, from the beginning of the 12th century to 1284). Historical.

*Storla Stærka Saga* (of Storle the Strong). Fabulous.

*Sveins Rimur Muk sonar* (rhymes of Svein the Monk's son).

*Sigurdar Fots Saga* (of Sigurd Foot).

*Skida Rima* (rhyme of Skida).

*Sverris Saga* (of King Swerrer, from 1177, when Snorro Sturleson's Heimskringla ends, to King Swerrer's death). Historical.

*Stuff's Thattr* (Traits of Stuff the Scald, who lived in the time of Harald Sigurdson, about 1050). Historical.

*Skaldhelga Rimur* (rhymes of the Scald Helga).

*Svarfdæla Saga* (of Thorstein, who first settled in Svarfdal in Iceland; and fabulous adventures of his successors). History and fable.

*Samsonar Saga Fagra* (of Samson the Fair). Fabulous.

*Stiarna Odda Draumr* (Star Odda, viz. the Astrologer Odda's Dream).

*Thomas Saga Erksbiskups* (of Archbishop Thomas of Canterbury).

*Tyodels Saga Riddara* (of the knight Tyodel. He could transform himself into a bear).

*Thidreks Saga af Bern* (of Dietric of Bern). The same as the German story.

*Thordar Hredu Saga* (of Thorder the Terrible, who, in 975, left Norway, and settled in Iceland). Historical.

*Thorer Haliggs Rimur*.

*Thorsteins Saga Sidu Halls sonar* (of Thorstein, son of Sidu Hall). Historical.

*Thorsteins Saga Vikings sonar* (of Thorstein son of the Viking). Fabulous.

*Thormodar Saga Kalbrunar Skalldz* (of Thormod Kalbrun the Scald). Historical.

*Thorsteins Saga Oxafots*. Fabulous.



*Thorlak Biskups Saga* (of Bishop Thorlak). Historical.

*Thorleif Saga Jarla Skaldz* (of Thorleif the Scald of the Earls of Orkney). Historical.

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*Ulfars Saga Stærka ok Onundar Fagra* (of Ulfar the Strong, and Onund the Fair; the one became a king in Africa, the other in Asia). Fabulous.

*Vatsdæla Saga* (of Ketil Thrumr, his son Thorstein, Ingimund and Sæmund, his grandsons, who settled in Vatsdal in Iceland). Historical.

*Valdemar's Saga* (of Valdemar, son of King Philip of Saxland).

*Valnaliots Saga* (of Valnaliot, an Icclander; the story of the 12th century). Historical.

*Victors Saga ok Blaus* (of Victor and Blaus). Fabulous.

*Vigagleims Saga* (of Gleim, son of Eyolf, who went to settle in Iceland 922). Historical.

*Vilhialms Saga Siods* (of William of the Treasure, a son of King Richard in England). Fabulous.

*Vilmundar Saga* (of Vilmund and Hierande, a son of a king in Frankland). Fabulous.

*Ulf's Saga Uggæ sonar* (of Ulf the son of Uggæ). Fabulous.

*Ulfhams Rimur* (Rhymes of Ulfham).

*Valvers Thattr* (Traits of the Life of Valver).

*Volsunga Saga*. Mythological.

*Yugvars Saga Vidforla* (of Yugvar the Far-travelled). History and fable.

It does not appear that any saga-manuscript\* now existing has been written before the 14th century, however old the saga itself may be. The Flatö manuscript is of 1395. Those supposed to have been written in the

\* Fagurskinna, Morkinskinna, Hrokkinskinna — fair skin, dark skin, wrinkled skin — are names applied by Torfæus to manuscripts on parchment, probably to designate, when he resided at Stavanger in Norway, to his friend and correspondent Arne Magnussen at Copenhagen, the particular skin he wanted to refer to, in a compendious way understood between themselves. It seems now to be doubtful which MSS. they meant by the Morkinskinna and Hrokkinskinna. Arne Magnussen, whose collection of manuscripts is so often quoted under the name of the Arnæ-Magnæi, was the greatest antiquary who *never wrote*. Although he wrote no books, his judgment and opinions are known from notes, selections, and correspondence, and are of great authority at this day in the Saga literature. Torfæus consulted him in his researches, which gives great weight to the views of Torfæus on many points, as we have in them the combined judgment of two of the greatest northern antiquaries.

13th century are not ascertained to be so on better data than the appearance and handwriting. It is known that in the 12th century Are Frode, Sæmund, and others began to take the sagas out of the traditional state, and fix them in writing; but none of the original skins appear to have come down to our times, but only some of the numerous copies of them. Bishop Müller shows good reasons for supposing that before Are Frode's time, and in the 11th century, sagas were committed to writing; but if we consider the scarcity of the material in that age—parchment of the classics, even in Italy, being often deleted, to be used by the monks for their writings—these must have been very few. No well-authenticated saga of ancient date in Runic is extant, if such ever existed; although Runic letters occur in Gothic, and even in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, mixed with the other characters.

To these Torfæus adds, — Historical Fragments concerning Ivar Vidfadme, Hrærer Staungraubang, Helgius the Acute, and the Battle of Bravalla: also the Codex Flateyensis, as above noticed, — a manuscript so called from the island Flatö, on the west side of Iceland, in which it was discovered, containing the genealogies and annals of the Norwegian kings and chiefs: also a manuscript called by him The Fair Skin — Fagrskinnan; being a breviary of the history of Norway, or chronological compendium from Halfdan the Black to Swerrer's reign; and also several ancient annals, which, being without titles, he cannot cite in his catalogue. Besides these, the following works, no longer extant in any known manuscripts, are referred to in the ancient histories, viz.: The history of Einar the son of Gisle, who killed Giafald, one of the court of King Magnus Barefoot, is cited in the end of the "Life of Saint John Bishop of Hølen." The history of Sigurd Cervus is cited by



Snorro Sturleson in his "Life of Halfdan the Black." The life of Alfgeir is cited in the "History of Holmen." The history of Grim the son of Krop, who killed Eyda the son of Skegg of Midfiord, is mentioned in the "Life of Gretter the Strong." The life of Thorgils the son of Hall, and the history of the people of Niardvik, are cited in the "History of the Laxdale People." The "Landnama" mentions histories of Bodmod, of Gerpis, of Grimelf, and the life of Thord Getter. The same work mentions also the history of the Thorskiord people, and a life of Vibjorn, who was one of the original settlers in Iceland when it was uninhabited. The history of the Sturlung family shows that formerly there were extant a history of the Berserker and Viking Hraungrid, and lives of Olaf king of the Lidmen or army, of Hrok the Black, and of Orm the Poet. Snorro appears to have read a history of the Skioldung family, that is, of the progenitors of the Danish dynasty. The "Life of Hrolf Krak" cites a life of Thorer the Dog-footed, and a life of Agnar son of Hroar king of Denmark. The "Life of Rolf the Walker\*, the Conqueror of Normandy," cites a history of the Hiodnarg people. The history of Skiold the son of Dag, and of Hermann, is cited in the "Life of Illug Grid's Foster-son." The "Life of Bose" mentions a life of Sigurd Hring. Mention of the histories of Ulf, son of Sebb, and of Earl Kvik, is made in the historical relation of some incidents by the scalds of Harald Haarfager. The "History of the Liosvatn People" cites a history of the people of Espholen. The writings of Are, who lived

\* Hrolf Gangr appears to have been a name in the family ; and one of the forefathers of the conqueror of Normandy bore it. The popular tale of his being so stout or corpulent that no horse could carry him, and he was obliged to walk, may therefore be doubted ; as such a habit of body would scarcely be consistent with the personal activity of great warriors in those days.



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about the year 1117, and first committed to writing the Icelandic compositions, and of Sæmund, who flourished about the year 1083, and had studied at universities in Germany and France, and of Oddo the Monk, who flourished in the 12th century, are almost entirely lost. Kolskegg, a contemporary of Are, and, like him, distinguished by the surname of Frode — the wise, or the much knowing, — Brandus, who lived about the year 1163, Eiric, the son of Oddo, and his contemporary Karl, abbot of the monastery of Thringö, in the north of Iceland, and several others, appear to have been collectors, transcribers, and partly continuators of preceding chronicles; and all these flourished between the time of Bede in the end of the 7th and beginning of the 8th century, when the devastations of these piratical Vikings were at the worst, and the time of Snorro Sturleson in the middle of the 13th century, when the Viking life was given up, invasions of Northmen even under their kings had ceased, and the influence of Christianity and its establishments was diffused.

Now we have here a vast body of literature, chiefly historical, or intended to be so, and all in the vernacular tongue of the Northmen. It is for our Anglo-Saxon scholars and antiquaries to say, whether in the Anglo-Saxon tongue, or in the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin together, such a body of national literature was produced, — whether such intellectual activity existed between the days of the Venerable Bede, our earliest historian, in the beginning of the 8th century, and the days of Matthew Paris, the contemporary of Snorro Sturleson, in the first half of the 13th? And these were Pagans, these Northmen, whether in Denmark, Norway, or Iceland, for more than half of these five centuries! This body of literature may surely be called a national literature; for on looking over the subjects it treats of, it will be found to con-

sist almost entirely of historical events, or of the achievements of individuals, which, whether real or fabulous, were calculated to sustain a national spirit among the people for whom they were composed; and scarcely any of it consists of the legends of saints, of homilies, or theological treatises, which constitute the greater proportion of the literature of other countries during the same ages, and which were evidently composed only for the public of the cloisters. It is distinguished also from any contemporary literature, and indeed from any known body of literature, by the peculiar circumstance of its having been for many centuries, and until the beginning of the 12th century, or within 120 years of Snorro Sturleson's own times, an oral not a written literature, and composed and transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth, and by memory, not by pen, ink, and parchment. This circumstance may affect the historical value of these documents, if the authenticity of what they relate be not supported by internal or collateral evidence, but does not affect their literary value as the compositions, during five centuries, of the Northmen, and as such to be compared with the compositions, during the same five centuries, of the cognate Anglo-Saxon people. It is of great importance, however, to examine the value, as historical documents, of these compositions.

The early history of every people can only have been preserved by traditionary stories, songs, ballads, until the age when they were fixed by writing. The early history of Rome, for many centuries, has had no other foundation than such a saga-literature as this of the Northmen. Homer, whether the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* be the works of one mind or of several, has had traditionary accounts as the historical foundation and authority for the events and personages he celebrates. Snorro Sturleson has done for the history



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of the Northmen what Livy did for the history of the Romans. The traditionary works of the predecessors of Livy in his historical field, the sagas of the Romans, have unfortunately not reached us. The ancient Roman writers themselves regret that the songs and legends, the sagas from which the historical accounts of their ancestors are derived, and which it appears from two passages in Cicero\* were extant in the time of the elder Cato, and, like the sagas of the Northmen, were sung or recited at feasts, had fallen into oblivion. Such documents in verse or prose are common to the early history of every people, and on such and on the similar transmission of them by memory, the historical Scriptures of the Old Testament themselves rest. These sagas have been preserved among the Northmen, or at least have not perished so entirely but that the sources from which their historian Snorro drew his information may be examined. They constitute the body of literature of which the list of sagas given above is an imperfect catalogue — imperfect because many sagas, songs, or other compositions referred to in those which are extant no longer exist, and probably never had been taken out of the traditionary state, in which they existed then as matter of memory, and been fixed in writing. If we consider the scarcity of the material — parchment — in the middle ages, even in the oldest Christianised countries of Europe, and the still greater scarcity of scribes, and men of learning and leisure, who would bestow their time and material on any subjects but monastic legends

\* Gravissimus auctor in ‘Originibus’ dixit Cato, morem apud majores hunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps, qui accubarent, canerent ad tibiam clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes.—*Cicero, Tusc. Quæst.* iv. 3.

Utinam exstarent illa carmina quæ multis sæculis ante suam ætatem in epulis esse cantitata a singulis convivis de clarorum virorum laudibus in ‘Originibus’ scriptum reliquit Cato.—*Cicero, Brutus*, cap. xix.

See on this subject the Preface to “Lays of Ancient Rome, by Thomas Babington Macaulay. London: Longman and Co. 1842.”



in the Latin language, we must wonder that so many of these historical tales had been committed to writing in Iceland; not that so many which once were extant in the traditionary state have not been preserved.

Every intelligent reader of English history who is startled at this view of the comparative literature and intellectual condition of the two branches, the pagan and the Christian, of the one great northern race, between the 8th and the 13th centuries, will desire information on the following points:—Who were the scribes, collectors, or compilers, who preceded Snorro Sturleson in writing down, gathering, or reducing to history, those traditionary narratives called Sagas which had floated down on the memory, in verse or in prose, from generation to generation? Who were the original authors of these compositions; and what was the condition of the class of men, the Scalds, who composed them? What were the peculiar circumstances in the social condition of the Northmen in those ages, by which such a class as the Scalds was kept in bread, and in constant employment and exertion among them, and even with great social consideration; while among the Anglo-Saxons, a cognate branch of the same people, the equivalent class of the Bards, Troubadours, Minstrels, Minnesingers, was either extinct, or of no more social influence than that of the Court Jesters or the Jougleurs?

Snorro Sturleson tells us, in the preface to his work, that “the priest Are hinn Frode (hinn Frode is applied to several writers, and means the Wise, the Learned; le Prud’homme perhaps of the Norman-French, although antiquaries render it into the more assuming Latin appellation, Polyhistor), was the first man in Iceland who wrote down in the Norse tongue both old and new narratives of events.” The Landnama Saga (Liber Originum Islandiæ), which treats of the first occupation of Iceland by the Norwegians, and

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of their descendants; the *Islindinga Bok*, or Book of Iceland, usually quoted by the title of the Latin translation, "*Schedæ Aarii Polyhistoris*," which is an account of the introduction of Christianity, and of other affairs in Iceland, and of the judges and other considerable personages; and the *Flateyjar Annall*, forming part of the important manuscript on parchment quoted so often by northern antiquaries by the name of the *Codex Flateyensis*,—are works of Are still extant. The *Flateyjar Annall* appears to have been a chronicle begun by Are, and continued by his successors in his parochial charge. It does not appear that any writing of Are upon parchment is extant, and his labours as a compiler appear to be known from the testimony only of Snorro Sturleson, or from copies such as those in the *Codex Flateyensis*, made from his writings. Are hinn Frode is reckoned by Torfæus to have been born about the year 1068, and to have written "the old and new narratives of events," which Snorro tells us he did, "two hundred and forty years after the first occupation of Iceland by the Norwegians;" about the year 1117. A manuscript of Biorn of Skardza, which Torfæus says was once in his possession, speaks of an older compiler than Are. Isleif, the first bishop of Iceland, who was consecrated by Adalbert, archbishop of Bremen, in 1056, and who died in 1080, is stated to have written a life of Harald Haarfager and his successors, down to Magnus the Good, who died about 1047, compiled from the current sagas; and his son, Bishop Gissur, is stated to have also collected and written down histories in the common tongue. Are hinn Frode was brought up as a foster-son in the house of Teit, another son of this Bishop Isleif, and, Torfæus supposes, may have used the materials collected by Isleif; and thus the labours of the two, as compilers or scribes of the ancient sagas, may have been attributed to the one of most



celebrity. The celibacy of the clergy appears not to have been regarded in the northern countries in the 11th or 12th centuries. We read of the wives and sons of priests down to a late period; and Bishop Isleif was not singular in having sons.

Sæmund, also designated as hinn Frode, was a contemporary of Are. He was born in 1056, and after travelling and studying in Germany and France returned to Iceland, and settled as priest of the parish of Odda, in the south of Iceland, and commenced the Annals, which were continued by his successors in the clerical charge of Odda, and are hence called “*Annales Oddenses*” by the northern antiquaries. The older Edda, of which the Edda of Snorro Sturleson is but an epitome for explaining the mythological language and allusions of the poetical saga, is attributed to him; but unfortunately it is almost entirely lost, so that we know little of the doctrines or establishments of the ancient Odin-worship. Odd the Monk, who lived in the following century, refers to an historical work of Sæmund, which is also lost. Sæmund died in 1133. His contemporary Are survived him, and died in 1148.

Kolskegg, also hinn Frode, was another contemporary of Are, whose name is known as a compiler, or scribe, but his works are not extant.

Brand, bishop of the diocese of Holen in Iceland, ordained 1164, and who died 1201, was also a diligent transcriber of sagas from the memory to parchment. He was a contemporary of Saxo Grammaticus, the Danish historian. Saxo himself, in the preface to his work, gives the strongest testimony to the diligence and importance of the historical researches and traditional records of the Icelanders. “Nor is the industry of the Tylenses (by which name Saxo designates the people of Tyle, Thule, or Iceland) to be passed over in silence, who, from the sterility of their native soil,



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being deprived of every luxury of food, exercise a perpetual sobriety, and turn every moment of their lives to the cultivation of a knowledge of the affairs of other countries, and, compensating their poverty by their ingenuity, consider it their pleasure to become acquainted with the transactions of other nations, and hold it to be not less honourable to record the virtues of others than to exhibit their own; and whose treasures in the records of historical transactions I have carefully consulted, and have composed no small portion of the present work according to their relations, not despising as authorities those whom I know to be so deeply imbued with a knowledge of antiquity." Saxo appears to have had access to many sagas, either in manuscript, or in *vivâ voce* relation, which are not now extant. Theodoric the Monk, a contemporary also of Saxo, who flourished about the year 1161, and wrote a history of the kings of Norway in Latin, and almost the only historical work of the middle ages composed in that language in Norway, gives a similar testimony to the great amount of historical knowledge among the Icelanders transmitted through their songs and sagas. The causes of this peculiar turn among the Icelanders will be inquired into afterwards.

Eiric, the son of Odd, wrote a history of King Harald Gille's sons, Sigurd and Inge, who succeeded him, as joint kings of Norway, about 1136, to the death of each of them; and gives also the history of King Magnus the Blind, and of Sigurd Slembidegn. As King Inge fell in battle in the year 1161, the work of Eiric is to be placed after that date. Karl, abbot of the monastery of Thing Isle in the north of Iceland, who was ordained in 1169, and died in 1213, wrote a life of his contemporary King Swerrer, who reigned from 1177 to 1202. His work is highly esteemed.

Odd the Monk, also hinn Frode, was next to, or

perhaps contemporary with, these writers, and composed a life of King Olaf Tryggvesson, containing circumstances not found in other accounts of that reign; from which it is supposed that he had access to sagas not now extant.

These are the principal historical writers who compiled or composed from the ancient unwritten sagas, between the days of Are hinn Frode in 1117, and the days of Snorro Sturleson in the beginning of the following century. In these hundred or hundred and twenty years between Are and Snorro, the great mass of literature in the vernacular tongue committed to parchment proves a state of great intellectual activity among these Northmen. It is not the literary or historical value, or the true dates or facts of these traditional pieces called sagas, written down for the first time within those hundred and twenty years, that is the important consideration to the philosophical reader of history; but the extraordinary fact, that before the Norman conquest of England here was a people but just Christianised, whose fathers were pagans, and who were still called barbarians by the Anglo-Saxons, yet with a literature in their own language diffused through the whole social body, and living in the common tongue and mind of the people. The reader would almost ask if the Anglo-Saxons were not the barbarians of the two,—a people, to judge from their history, without national feeling, interests, or spirit, sunk in abject superstition, and with no literature among them but what belonged to a class of men bred in the cloister, using only the Latin language, and communicating only with each other, or with Rome. In the same period in which the intellectual powers of the pagan or newly Christianised Northmen were at work in the national tongue upon subjects of popular interest, what was the amount of literary production among the Anglo-Saxons? Gildas,



the earliest British writer, was of the ancient British, not of the Anglo-Saxon people, and wrote about the year 560, or a century after the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in England. Gildas Albanus, or Saint Gildas, preceded him by about a century; and both wrote in Latin, not in the British or the Saxon tongue. The "*Historia Ecclesiastica Venerabilis Bedæ*" was written in Latin about the year 731; and King Alfred translated this work of the Venerable Bede into Anglo-Saxon about 858, or by other account some time between 872 and 900. Asser wrote "*De Vita et Rebus Gestis Alfredi*" about the same period, for he died 910. Nennius, and his annotator Samuel, are placed by Pinkerton about the year 858. Florence of Worcester wrote about 1100; Simeon of Durham about 1164; Giraldus Cambrensis in the same century. The "*Saxon Chronicle*" appears to have been the work of different hands from the 11th to the 12th century. Roger of Hovedon wrote about 1210; Matthew Paris, the contemporary of Snorro Sturleson, about 1240. These are the principal writers among the Anglo-Saxons referred to by our historians, down to the age of Snorro Sturleson; and they all wrote in Latin, not in the language of the people—the Anglo-Saxon.

This separation of the mind and language, and of the intellectual influence of the upper educated classes, from the uneducated mass of the Anglo-Saxon people, on the Continent as well as in England, by the barrier of a dead language, forms the great distinctive difference between the Anglo-Saxons and the Northmen; and to it may be traced much of the difference in the social condition, spirit, and character of the two branches of the Teutonic or Saxon race at the present day. It is but about a century ago, about 1740, that this barrier was broken down in Germany, and men of genius or science began to write for the German



mind in its own German language. With the exception of Luther's translation of the Bible, little or nothing had been written before the 18th century for the German people in the German tongue. That beautiful language itself had become so Latinised by the use and application of Latin in all business and intellectual production — a circumstance which both Goëthe and Jean Paul Richter, its greatest masters, deplore — that it was, and to a considerable degree remains in the present times, a different language in writing from the spoken vernacular tongue of the people of Germany. They have to acquire it, as, in some sort, a dead language to them, to understand and enter into the meaning and spirit of their own best writers. Their *Plat Deutch*, the spoken tongue of the mass of the people, does not merely differ as our Scotch, Yorkshire, or Somersetshire dialects differ from English, only in tone of voice, pronunciation, and in the use of a few obsolete words; but in construction and elements, from the too great admixture of foreign elements from the Latin into the cultivated German. A striking proof of this is, that no sentiment, phrase, popular idea, or expression from the writings of Lessing, Goëthe, Schiller, Richter, or any other great German writer, is ever heard among the lower classes in Germany, the peasants, labouring people, and uneducated masses; while, with us, sentiments, expressions, phrases, from Shakspeare, Pope, Burns, Swift, De Foe, Cobbett, — from Cervantes, Le Sage, Moliere, — have crept into common use and application, as proverbial sayings circulating among our totally uneducated classes, who certainly never read those authors, but have caught up from others what is good and natural, because the thought is expressed in language which they are as familiar with as the writer was himself. In our branch of the Saxon race, the intellectuality of the educated

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class has always worked downwards through a language common to all. The moral influence of this uninterrupted circulation of ideas from the highest to the lowest is very striking in our social condition, and in that of all the people descended from the Northmen, the younger branch of the great Anglo-Saxon race. Under every form of government, whether despotic as in Denmark, aristocratic as in Sweden, democratic as in the United States, or mixed as in England, they are, under all circumstances, distinguished from the other, the old Anglo-Saxon branch, by their strong nationality and distinct national characters. What is this but the diffusion of one mind, one spirit, one mode of thinking and doing, through the whole social body of each of these groups, by a common language and literature, such as it may be, giving one shape and tone to the mind of all? Turn from these groups of the European population, and look at the nationality or national character of the other branch of the race — or rather look for it. Where is it? Have Prussians, Saxons, Hanoverians, Hessians, Baden-Badenians, or whatever their rulers call them, any jot of this national feeling, any national existence at all? Have the Germans as a whole mass, or has any one group of them, any national character at this day, any common feeling among all classes upon any one subject? There is a want of that circulation of the same mind and intelligence through all classes of the social body, differing only in degree, not in kind, in the most educated and the most ignorant, and of that circulation and interchange of impressions through a language and literature common to all, which alone can animate a population into a nation. It would be a curious subject for the political philosopher to examine, what have been the effects of the literature of a people upon their social condition. English literature works much more



powerfully upon the great mass of the English people, although uneducated, and unable to receive its influence and impression direct, than German literature, although much more abundant, works upon the people of Germany. The circulation of ideas stops there at a certain class, and the mass remains unmoved by, impenetrable to, and unintelligent of the storms that may be raging on the surface among the upper educated people. The literature of the Northmen in their own tongue undoubtedly kept alive that common feeling and mind—that common sense on matters of common interest, which in England grew up into our national institutions. They had a literature of their own, however rude, a history of their own, however barbarous,—had laws, institutions, and social arrangements of their own; and all these through a common language influencing and forming a common mind in all; and when men, or the children of men whose minds had been so formed, came to inhabit, and not merely to conquer, but to colonise a very large proportion of the surface of England, we may safely assume that what we call the Anglo-Saxon institutions of England, and the spirit and character on which alone free institutions can rest, were the natural productions of this national mind, reared by the Northmen in England, and not by the Anglo-Saxons.

What were the peculiar circumstances in the social condition of this branch of the Saxon race, which kept alive a national literature, history, spirit, and character, and peculiar laws and institutions, while all that was peculiar to or distinctive of the other branch had long been extinguished in Germany, and in a great measure in England? This question can only be answered by looking at the original position of this northern branch of the same stock, on the European soil.

The race of men who under Odin established them-



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selves in the countries north of the Baltic were undoubtedly of Asiatic origin. The date of this inundation may have been 400 years before or 400 years after the Christian era (antiquaries have their theories for both periods), or there may have been different Odins, or the name may have been generic and applied to all great conquerors ; and the causes, as well as the dates of this vast movement, are lost in the night of antiquity. The fact itself admits of no doubt ; for it rests not only on the concurrent traditions and religious belief of the people, but upon customs retained by them to a period far within the pale of written history, and which could only have arisen in the country from which they came, not in that to which they had come. The use, for instance, of horse-flesh could never have been an original indigenous Scandinavian custom, because the horse there is an animal too valuable and scarce ever to have been an article of food, as on the plains of Asia ; but down to the end of the 11th century the eating of horse-flesh at the religious feasts, as commemorative of their original country, prevailed, and was the distinctive token of adhering to the religion of Odin : and those who ate horse-flesh were punished with death by Saint Olaf. A plurality of wives also, in which the most Christian of their kings indulged even so late as the 12th century, was not a custom which, in a poor country like Scandinavia, was likely to prevail, and appears more probably of Asiatic origin. But what could have induced a migrating population from the Tanais (the Don), on which traditionary history fixes their original seat, after reaching the southern coasts of the Baltic, to have turned to the north and crossed the sea to establish themselves on the bleak inhospitable rocks, and in the severe climate of Scandinavia, instead of overspreading the finer countries on the south side of the Baltic ? The political causes from preoccupation,

or opposition of tribes as warlike as themselves, cannot now be known from any historical data ; but from physical data we may conjecture that such a deviation from what we would consider the more natural run of the tide of a population seeking a living in new homes, may have been preferable to any other course in their social condition. We make a wrong estimate of the comparative facilities of subsisting, in the early ages of mankind, in the northern and southern countries of Europe. If a tribe of red-men from the forests of America had been suddenly transported in the days of Tacitus to the forests of Europe beyond the Rhine, where would they, in what is called the hunter state, that is, depending for subsistence on the spontaneous productions of nature, have found in the greatest abundance the means and facilities of subsisting themselves? Unquestionably on the Scandinavian peninsula, intersected by narrow inlets of the sea teeming with fish, by lakes and rivers rich in fish, and in a land covered with forests, in which not only all the wild animals of Europe that are food for man abound, but from the numerous lakes, rivers, ponds, and precipices in this hunting-field, are to be got at and caught with much greater facility than on the boundless plains, on which, from the Rhine to the Elbe, and from the Elbe to the Vistula, or to the steppes of Asia, there is scarcely a natural feature of country to hem in a herd of wild animals in their flight, and turn them into any particular tract or direction to which the hunters could resort with advantage, and at which they could depend on meeting their prey. At this day Norway is the only country in Europe in which men subsist in considerable comfort in what may be called the hunter state, — that is, upon the natural products of the earth and waters, to which man in the rudest state must have equally had access in all ages, — and derive their food, fuel, clothing, and lodging from the forest,



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the Fielde, the fiords, and rivers, without other aid from agriculture, or the arts of civilised life, than is implied in keeping herds of reindeer in a half tame state, or a few cows upon the natural herbage of the mountain glens. We, in our state of society, do not consider that the superior fertility of the warmer climes and better soils of southern countries, adds nothing to the means of subsistence of those who do not live upon those products of the earth which are obtained by cultivation. A hermit at the present day could subsist himself, from the unaided bounty of nature, much better at the side of a fiord in Norway, than on the banks of the Tiber, or of the Tagus, or of the Thames. Iceland, which we naturally think the last abode to which necessity could drive settlers, had in its abundance of fish, wild fowl, and pasturage for sheep and cows, although the country never produced corn, such advantages that it was the earliest of modern colonies, and was a favourite resort of emigrants in the 9th century. The Irish monk Dicuil, who wrote in 825 his work "*De Mensura Orbis Terræ*," published by C. A. Walckenaer in Paris in 1828, says that for 100 years, that is from 725, the desire for the hermit life had led many Irish clerks to the islands to the north of the British sea, which, with a fair wind, may be reached in two days' sail from the most northerly British isles. These were most likely the Feroe Isles, or Westmann Isles. "These isles," he says, "from the creation of the world uninhabited, and unnamed, are now, in 825, deserted by the hermits on account of the northern sea robbers. They have innumerable sheep, and many sorts of sea fowl." This would show that even before the settlement of the Northmen in Iceland about 825 (and in one of the sagas it is said the first settlers found in the Westmann Isles books and other articles of Irish priests), the facility of subsistence had drawn some individuals to those rocks in the northern ocean, and they were



then known lands. Sweden had a still stronger attraction for the warlike tribes from the interior of Asia, who were pressing upon the population of Europe south of the Baltic, and which has been overlooked by the historians who treat of the migrations of mankind from or to the north in the rude ages. Sweden alone had iron and copper for arms and utensils close to the surface of the earth, and, from the richness of the ores, to be obtained by the simplest processes of smelting. This natural advantage must, in those ages, have made Sweden a rallying point for the Asiatic populations coming into Europe from the north of Asia, and from countries destitute of the useful metals in any abundant or easily obtained supply. To them Sweden was a Mexico or Peru, or rather an arsenal from which they must draw their weapons before they could proceed to Germany. This circumstance itself may account for the apparently absurd opinion of the swarms of Goths who invaded Europe having come from Scandinavia; and for the apparently absurd tradition of Odin, or the Asiatics invading and occupying Scandinavia in preference to the more genial countries and climes to the south of the Baltic; and for the historical fact of a considerable trade having existed, from the most remote times, between Novogorod and Sweden, and of which, in the very earliest ages, Wisby, in the Isle of Gotland, was the *entrepôt* or meeting-place for the exchange of products. The great importance of this physical advantage of Scandinavia in the abundance of copper and iron, to an ancient warlike population, will be understood best if we take the trouble to calculate what quantity of iron or copper must have been expended in those days as ammunition, in missile weapons, by an ordinary army in an ordinary battle. We cannot reckon less than one ounce weight of iron, on an average, to each arrow-head, from twenty to twenty-four *drop*, or an ounce

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and a quarter to an ounce and a half, being considered by modern archers the proper weight of an arrow; and we cannot reckon that bowmen took the field with a smaller provision than four sheaves of arrows, or heads for that number. A sheaf of twenty-four arrows would not keep a Bowman above ten or twelve minutes; and in an ordinary battle of three or four hours, allowing that arrows might be picked up and shot back in great numbers, we cannot suppose a smaller provision belonging to and transported with a body of bowmen than ninety-six rounds each, which, for a body of 4000 men only, would amount to above fourteen tons weight of iron in arrow-heads alone. For casting spears or javelins, of which in ancient armies, as in the Roman, more use was made than of the bow, we cannot reckon less than six ounces of iron to the spear head, or less than two spears to each man; and this gives us nearly two tons weight more of iron for 4000 men as their provision in this kind of missile. Of hand-weapons, such as swords, battleaxes, halberds, spears, and of defensive armour, such as head-pieces and shields, which every man had, and coats of mail or armour, which some had, it is sufficient to observe that all of it would be lost iron to the troops who were defeated, or driven from the field of battle leaving their killed and wounded behind, and all had to be replaced by a fresh supply of iron. We see in this great amount of iron or bronze arms, to be provided and transported with even a very small body of men in ancient times, why a single battle was almost always decisive, and every thing was staked upon the issue of a single day; and we see why defeat, as in the case of the battle of Hastings and many others, was almost always irrecoverable with the same troops. They had no ammunition on the losing side after a battle. We may judge from these views how important and valuable it must have been for an invading army of



Goths, or whatever name they bore, coming from Asia to Europe, to have got possession of Sweden; so important, indeed, that it is reasonable to believe that if ever an Asiatic people invaded Europe north of the Carpathian mountains, the invaders would first of all proceed north along the Vistula and other rivers falling into the Baltic, and put themselves in communication, by conquest or commerce, with the country which supplied their ammunition, and would then issue armed from the north, and break into the Roman empire, and be considered as a people coming originally from some northern hive. Scandinavia certainly never had food for more human beings than its present inhabitants, and could never have poured out the successive multitudes who, by all accounts, are said to have come in from the north upon the Roman provinces; but in this view it is likely that the flood of people actually did pour in from the north, to which the march must of necessity have been first directed from Asia. It may be objected to these views, that iron or metal was not of such prime necessity as we make it to these barbarians in their warfare; that flint or other stones were much used for arrow-heads, and that we find such commonly in museums, and even stones that have evidently been intended for javelins or battleaxes. If we look, however, at what exists out of museums, we find that stones which admit of being chiselled, sharpened, or brought to an edge or point that would pierce cloth, leather, or any defensive covering, and inflict a deadly wound, are among the rarest productions. Granite, gneiss, sandstone, limestone, all rise in lumps and cubical masses, scarcely to be reduced by any labour or skill to shapes suitable for a spear or arrow head. Countries of vast extent are without stone at all near the surface of the earth, and many without such a kind of stone as could be edged or pointed, without such skill and



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labour as would make stone arrow-heads more scarce and valuable than metal ones. Of such stones as might be substituted for metal in missile weapons it happens, singularly enough, that Scandinavia itself is more productive than any part of the north of Europe, if we except perhaps the districts of England abounding in flint. Our ordinary museum arrow-heads of stone, or what our country people, when they turn them up by the plough, call elf-bolts, from an obscure impression that they do not belong to the soil, but are, from the regularity of their shape, an artificial production, are in reality the organic fossil called by geologists the Belemnite, which, tapering to a point at both ends from regular equally poised sides, is, in its natural fossil state, an arrow-head. This fossil, and the sharp schists, which could easily be formed into effective points for missile weapons, abound particularly in that great indenture of the Norwegian coast called the Skager Rack, and in the middle ages called Vicken, or the Wick, or Vik, between the Naze of Norway and the Sound or the coast of Jutland, and from which Pinkerton conjectures the Scottish Picts or Victi, if they were a Gothic tribe, originally proceeded. He founds his conjecture on the similarity of name; and the Vikings or pirates probably derived their name from this district of Viken in which they harboured, and for the obvious reason that here the means of replenishing their ships with the missile arms of the age abounded. Hardsteinagriot, or small hard stones, appear to have been even an article of export at a very early date from Telemark, and to have been shipped from the coast to which they were transported in quantities of 1500 loads at a time from the interior.\* Stones for throwing by hand (the sling, on account of the space required around the

\* Krafts Beskryvelse, 111. 154. Kong Sverrer's Saga, by Jacob Aal, note on cap. 91.

slinger, seems never to have been in use) were so important an article in the sea fights of those times, that the ships of war, or long-ships, were always accompanied on the viking cruises by transports or ships of burden, to carry the plunder, clothes, and provisions, the ships of war being loaded with arms and stones. We find two transport vessels to ten ships of war in the Saga of Saint Olaf, as the number with him when he left his ships of war at the mouth of the Humber, after a long viking expedition, and returned to Norway, with 220 men, in his two transport ships. Earl Rognwald, the son of Koli, invaded Earl Paul in Orkney with six ships of war, five boats of a size to cross the sea from Norway, and three ships of burden\*; and in all their expeditions ships of burden were required in some proportion to the ships of war, owing to the great stowage necessary for their weapons. In the Færeyinga Saga, in which the exploits of a viking† called Sigmund Brestisson are related minutely, we read of his walking across a small island on the Swedish coast, and discovering five ships of another viking at anchor on the opposite side, and he returned to his own ships, passed the whole night in landing his goods and plunder, and breaking up stones on shore, and loading his vessel with them, and at daylight he went to attack the other viking, and

\* Olaf's Saga, cap. 27. Orkneyinga Saga.

† Viking and sea-king are not synonymous, although, from the common termination in *king*, the words are used, even by our historians, indiscriminately. The sea-king was a man connected with a royal race either of the small kings of the country, or of the Haarfager family, and who by right received the title of king as soon as he took the command of men, although only of a single ship's crew, and without having any land or kingdom. The viking is a word not connected with the word kongr or king. Vikings were merely pirates, alternately peasants and pirates, deriving the name of viking from the viks, wicks, or inlets on the coast in which they harboured with their long ships or rowing galleys. Every sea-king was a viking, but every viking was not a sea-king.



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captured his vessels. In the engagement of Earl Paul in Orkney with the friends of Earl Rognwald he refused the assistance of men from Erling of Tankerness, off which place the battle was fought, because he had as many men as could find room to fight in his vessels, but required his assistance in carrying out stones from the shore to his vessels as long as the enemy would allow it to be done safely. Stones could not be transported or distributed in a conflict on land; and on this account the Northmen appear generally to have kept to their ships in their battles, and, even when marauding on land, to have had their ships far up the rivers to retire upon. This circumstance, namely, the great bulk in stowage, and in transport by land, of the usual arms of the age, arrows, casting spears, and stones, in any considerable quantities for a body of troops, and the difficulty of concentrating stores of them just at the spot where they are needed on land, accounts in a great measure for the success of comparatively small bodies of invaders landing on the coasts of England, or Normandy, in those ages. The invaders had the advantage of a supply of weapons in their vessels to retire upon, or to advance from; while their opponents having once expended what they carried with them, which could scarcely exceed the consumption in one ordinary battle of a few hours' duration, would be totally without missiles.

In the settlement of an Asiatic population in Scandinavia, which, whatever may have been the cause or inducement for preferring that side of the Baltic, undoubtedly did take place at an unascertained date, under a chief called Odin, we find a remarkable difference of social arrangement — and a sufficient cause for it — from that social arrangement which grew up among the people who invaded and seized on the ancient Roman empire. The latter were settling in countries of which the land was already appropriated;



and however warlike and numerous we may conceive these invaders to have been, they could be but a handful compared to the numbers of the old indigenous inhabitants. They of necessity, and for security, had to settle as they had conquered, in military array, under local military chiefs whose banners they had followed in war, and were, for safety and mutual protection, obliged to rally around in peace. The people had the same military duties to perform to their chiefs, and their chiefs to the general commander or king, as in the field. They were, in fact, an army in cantonments in an enemy's country; and this, which is the feudal system, is the natural system of social arrangement in every country taken possession of by invaders in spite of the indigenous original inhabitants. It is found in several provinces of India, in several of the South Sea Islands, and wheresoever men have come into a country and seized the land of the first occupants. But where there is none to disturb the invaders—where they are themselves the first occupants, this military arrangement is unnecessary, and therefore unnatural. The first invaders of Scandinavia have entered into an uninhabited or unappropriated country, or if inhabited, it has been by a wandering or very unwarlike population, like the present Laplanders, or the Fenni of Tacitus. We are entitled to draw this conclusion from the circumstance that these invaders did not occupy and sit down in the country feudally. Each man possessed his lot of land without reference to or acknowledgment of any other man,—without any local chief to whom his military service or other quit-rent for his land was due,—without tenure from, or duty or obligation to any superior, real or fictitious, except the general sovereign. The individual settler held his land, as his descendants in Norway still express it, by the same right as the king held his crown—by udal

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right, or adel, — that is, noble right ; subject to no feudal burden, servitude, escheat, or forfeiture to a superior from any feudal casualty. This was the natural arrangement of society, and the natural principle of possession in a country not previously occupied, and in which the settlers had consequently no reason for submitting to feudal obligations and to a military organisation. When the very same people, these unfeudalised Northmen, came to conquer and settle in Normandy, in a country appropriated and peopled, and which they had to defend as well as to invade and occupy, they naturally adopted the feudal social arrangement necessary for their security, and maintained it in all its rigour. In the very same century the kinsmen of the same chief, Rolf Ganger, who was conquering and feudally occupying Normandy, came to settle in Iceland, where they had no occasion for the military organisation and principle of the feudal system in the unappropriated, uninhabited island ; and they occupied it not feudally, but, as their ancestors had occupied the mother country itself, udally. The udal landowners, although exempt from all feudal services, exactions, or obligations to any other man as their local chief, or, in feudal language, the superior of their lands, were by no means exempt from services or taxes to the king or general chief, who was udal-born to the sovereignty of the whole or of a part of the country, and was acknowledged by the Thing or assembly of the landowners of the district. The kingly power was as great as in any feudally constituted country, either for calling out men and ships for his military expeditions abroad or at home, or for raising taxes. The scatt was a fixed land-tax, paid to the king either in money or in kind, that is, in natural products of the land, and was collected by his officers yearly in each district, or even let for a proportion of the amount to his friends or lenders.



during life or pleasure. This class of lenders appears to have been the nearest approach to a feudal class in their social arrangements; but the *lend* was a temporary, not an hereditary holding, and was not accompanied by any feudal privileges or baronial powers. The kings also received in their royal progresses through the country free lodging and entertainment for themselves and a certain fixed number of *herdmen*, that is a court, for a certain fixed number of days in each district. All the most minute particulars of the supplies which each farm or little estate—for each little farm was a distinct udal estate—had to furnish, the turns in which each locality was liable to this entertaining of the king and court, the time and numbers of the court followers to be entertained, were matters of fixed law, and settled by the Things of each district. In these circuits the kings assembled the district Things, and with the assistance of the lögman, who appears to have been a local judge, either hereditary or appointed by the Thing, settled disputes between parties, and fixed the amount of money compensation or fine to be paid to the injured party. All offences and crimes, from the murder of the king himself down to the very slightest injury, or infraction of law, were valued and compensated for in money, and divided in certain portions between the party injured, (or his next of kin if he was murdered,) and the king. The offender was an outlaw until he, or his friends for him, had paid the mulct or compensation, and could be slain, without any mulct or fine for his murder. The friends of the injured or murdered party could refuse to accept of any compensation in money, but could lawfully wait an opportunity, and take their revenge in kind. The king could only remit his own share of the mulct, but not that of the friends of the murdered party; and not to revenge an injury received and not compromised by a compen-



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sation, appears to have been considered highly dishonourable. The revenues of the kings appear to have been drawn, in some considerable proportion, from this source. When not engaged in warfare they appear to have been subsisted, as their ordinary mode of living, on these royal circuits or progresses through the country. The kings had no fixed residence or palace in Norway; but had estates or royal domains in every district, and houses on them in which they could lodge for a time, and receive what was due for their entertainment in victuals from the neighbourhood; but these houses appear to have been no better mansions than the houses on any other estates, and the kings were usually lodged, with their courts, as well as subsisted, by the landowners or bonders. This usage of royal progresses for the subsistence of the royal household appears to have been introduced into England at the Norman, or rather at the previous Danish conquest; and the purveyance for it was a royal right, which continued to be exercised down to the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Before the introduction or general diffusion of writing, it is evident that a class of men whose sole occupation was to commit to memory and preserve the laws, usages, precedents, and details of all those civil affairs and rights, and to whose fidelity in relating former transactions implicit confidence could be given, must of necessity have existed in society — must have been in every locality; and from the vast number and variety of details in every district, and the great interests of every community, must have been esteemed and recompensed in proportion to their importance in such a social state. This class were the scalds — the men who were the living books, to be referred to in every case of law or property in which the past had to be applied to the present. Before the introduction of Christianity, and with

Christianity the use of written documents, and the diffusion, by the church establishment, of writing in every locality, the scald must have been among the pagan landowners what the parish priest and his written record were in the older Christianised countries of Europe. In these all civil affairs were in written record either of the priest or the lawyer; and the scalds, in these Christianised countries, were merely a class of wandering troubadours, poets, story-tellers, minnesingers, entertained, like the dwarfs, court-jesters, or jugglers, by the great barons at their castles, for the entertainment which their songs, music, stories, or practical jokes might afford. Here, in this pagan country, they were a necessary and most important element in the social structure. They were the registrars of events affecting property, and filled the place and duty of the lawyer and scribe in a society in which law was very complicated; the succession to property, through affinity and family connexion, very intricate, from the want of family surnames, and the equal rights of all children; and in which a priesthood like that of the church of Rome, spread over the country, and acquainted more or less with letters, the art of writing, and law, was totally wanting. The scalds of the north disappeared at once when Christian priests were established through the country. They were superseded in their utility by men of education, who knew the art of writing; and the country had no feudal barons to maintain such a class for amusement only. We hear little of the scalds after the first half of the 12th century; and they are not quoted at all in the portion of Magnus Erlingsson's reign given by Snorro Sturleson within the 12th century.

Besides the payment of scatt, and the maintenance of the king's household in the royal progresses, the whole body of the landowners were bound to attend



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the king in arms, and with ships, whenever they were called upon to serve him either at home or abroad. The king appears, in fact, not only not to have wanted any prerogative that feudal sovereigns of the same times possessed, but to have had much more power than the monarchs of other countries. The middle link in the feudal system — a nobility of great crown vassals, with their sub-vassals subservient to them as their immediate superiors, not to the crown — was wanting in the social structure of the Northmen. The kingly power working directly on the people was more efficient; and the kings, and all who had a satisfactory claim to the royal power, had no difficulty in calling out the people for war expeditions. These expeditions, often merely predatory in their object, consisted either of general levies, in which all able-bodied men, and all ships, great and small, had to follow the king; or of certain quota of men, ships, and provisions, furnished by certain districts according to fixed law. All the country along the coasts of Norway, and as far back into the land “as the salmon swims up the rivers,” was divided into ship-districts or ship-rathes; and each district had to furnish ships of a certain size, a certain number of men, and a certain equipment, according to its capability; and other inland districts had to furnish cattle and other provision in fixed numbers. This arrangement was made by Harald Haarfager’s successor, Hakon, who reigned between 933 and 961; and as Hakon was the foster-son of Athelstan of England, and was bred up to manhood in his court, it is not improbable that this arrangement may have been borrowed from the similar arrangement made by King Alfred for the defence of the English coast against the Northmen; unless we take the still more probable conjecture that Alfred borrowed it himself from them, as they were certainly in all naval and military affairs superior to his own

people in that age. It is to be observed, that, for the Northmen, these levies for predatory expeditions were by no means unpopular or onerous. "To gather property" by plundering the coasts of cattle, meal, malt, wool, slaves, was a favourite summer occupation. When the crops were in the ground in spring, the whole population, which was seafaring as well as agricultural in its habits, was altogether idle until harvest; and the great success in amassing booty, as vikings, on the coasts, made the Leding, as it was called, a favourite service during many reigns: and it appears that the service might be commuted sometimes into a war tax, when it was inconvenient to go on the levy. Every man, it is to be observed, who went upon these expeditions, was udal born to some portion of land at home; that is, had certain udal rights of succession, or of purchase; or of partition, connected with the little estate of the family of which he was a member. All these complicated rights and interests connecting people settled in Northumberland, East Anglia, Normandy, or Iceland, with landed property situated in the valleys of Norway, required a body of men, like the scalds, whose sole occupation was to record in their stories trustworthy accounts, not only of the historical events, but of the deaths, intermarriages, pedigrees, and other family circumstances of every person of any note engaged in them. We find, accordingly, that the sagas are, as justly observed by Pinkerton, rather memoirs of individuals than history. They give the most careful heraldic tracing of every man's kin they speak of, because he was kin to landowners at home, or they were kin to him. In such a social state we may believe that the class of scalds were not, as we generally suppose, merely a class of story-tellers, poets, or harpers, going about with gossip, song, and music; but were interwoven with the social institutions of the country, and



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had a footing in the material interests of the people. To take an interest in the long-past events of history is an acquired intellectual taste, and not at all the natural taste of the unlettered man. When we are told of the Norman baron in his castle-hall, or the Iceland peasant's family around their winter fireside in their turf-built huts, sitting down in the 10th or 11th century to listen to, get by heart, and transmit to the rising generation, the accounts of historical events of the 8th or 9th century in Norway, England, or Denmark, we feel that, however pleasing this picture may be to the fancy, it is not true to nature,—not consistent with the human mind in a rude illiterate social state. But when we consider the nature of the peculiar udal principle by which land or other property was transmitted through the social body of these Northmen, we see at once a sufficient foundation in the material interests, both of the baron and the peasant, for the support of a class of traditionary relators of past events. Every person in every expedition was udal born to something at home, — to the kingdom, or to a little farm; and this class were the recorders of the vested rights of individuals, and of family alliances, feuds, or other interests, when written record was not known. For many generations after the first Northmen settled in England or Normandy, it must, from the uncertain issue of their hostilities with the indigenous inhabitants, have been matter of deep interest to every individual to know how it stood with the branch of the family in possession of the piece of udal land in the mother-country to which he also was udal born, that is, had certain eventual rights of succession; and whether to return and claim their share of any succession which may have opened up to them in Norway must have been a question with settlers in Northumberland, Normandy, or Iceland, which could only be solved by the information

derived from such a class as the scalds. Before the clergy by their superior learning extinguished the vocation of this class among the Northmen, the scalds appear to have been frequently employed also as confidential messengers or ambassadors; as, for instance, in the proposal of a marriage between Olaf King of Norway and the daughter of King Olaf of Sweden, and of a peace between the two countries to be established by this alliance. The scalds, by their profession, could go from court to court without suspicion, and in comparative safety; because, being generally natives of Iceland, they had no hereditary family feuds with the people of the land, no private vengeance for family injuries to apprehend; and being usually rewarded by gifts of rings, chains, goblets, and such trinkets, they could, without exciting suspicion, carry with them the tokens by which, before the art of writing was common in courts, the messenger who had a private errand to unfold was accredited. When kings or great people met in those ages they exchanged gifts or presents with each other, and do so still in the East; and the original object of this custom was that each should have tokens known to the other, by which any bearer afterwards should be accredited to the original owner of the article sent with him in token, and even the amount of confidence to be reposed in him denoted. We, with writing at command, can scarcely perhaps conceive the shifts people must have been put to, when even the most simple communication or order had to be delivered *vivâ voce* to some agent who was to carry it, and who had to produce some credential or token that he was to be believed. Every act of importance between distant parties had to be transacted by tokens. Our wonder and incredulity cease when we consider that such a class of men as those who composed and transmitted this great mass of saga literature were evidently a necessary element



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in the social arrangements of the time and people, and, together with their literature or traditional songs and stories, were intimately connected with the material interests of all, and especially of those who had property and power. They were not merely a class of wandering poets, troubadours, or story-tellers, living by the amusement they afforded to a people in a state too rude to support any class for their intellectual amusement only. The scalds, who appear to have been divided into two classes, — poets, who composed or remembered verses in which events were related, or chiefs and their deeds commemorated; and saga-men, who related historical accounts of transactions past or present, — were usually, it may be said exclusively, of Iceland.

It is usually considered a wonderful and unaccountable phenomenon in the history of the middle ages, that an island like Iceland, producing neither corn nor wood, situated in the far north, ice-bound in part even in summer, surrounded by a wild ocean, and shaken and laid waste by volcanic fire, should, instead of being an uninhabited land, or inhabited only by rude and ignorant fishermen, have been the centre of intelligence in the north, and of an extensive literature. It is wonderful; but, if we consider the causes, the phenomenon is naturally and soberly accounted for. Iceland was originally colonised by the most cultivated and peaceful of the mother country; the nobility and people of the highest civilisation then in the north flying, in the 9th century, and especially after the battle of Hafursfiord, from what they considered the tyranny of Harald Haarfager, and the oppression of the feudal system which he was attempting to establish in Norway. It was an emigration from principle. The very poor and ignorant, and those who merely sought gain without any higher motive for their emigration, could not go to Iceland; because a suitable

vessel, with the necessary outfit and stock, could only be afforded by people of the highest class, and they only had to dread the jealousy and power of Haarfager. Their friends, retainers, housemen, and servants attached to their families, went with them; but the *landnammen*, the *origines gentis*, were the sons and brothers of the nobles and kings, as they were called, who from the very same cause, the dread and hatred of Haarfager's power, went out to plunder and conquer on the coasts of England and France. At the very same period that Rolf Ganger set out on his expedition, which ended in the conquest of Normandy, one of his brothers sought a peaceful asylum in the uninhabited Iceland; and the more peaceful of the higher class in those days were, we may presume, the most civilised and cultivated of their age. New England, perhaps, and Iceland, are the only modern colonies ever founded on principle, and peopled at first from higher motives than want or gain; and we see at this day a lingering spark in each of a higher mind than in populations which have set out from a lower level. The original settlers in Iceland carried with them whatever there was of civilisation or intelligence in Norway; and for some generations at least were free from the internal feuds, and always were free from the external wars and depredations on their coasts, which kept other countries in a state of barbarism. They enjoyed security of person and property. The means of subsistence in Iceland were not so very different from the means in Norway, nor of so much more difficult attainment, as might on a hasty view be supposed. The south coast of Iceland is not higher north than the country about Drontheim fiord, and the most northerly part is barely within the Arctic Circle. A large proportion of the population of Norway lived in those ages, and live now, in as high a latitude; and, from not being surrounded by the ocean



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on all sides, in a severer climate ; and under the local disadvantage, from the shape of the country, that the Fielde or mountain ridges in Norway approach much closer to the shore, and leave much less flat level pasture land between them and the sea than the mountains of Iceland. The cultivation of corn is as much out of the question in a great proportion of Norway as in Iceland. The people in the upland districts of every province of Norway, and almost all the population north of the Namsen river, draw the main part of their subsistence at present from the natural products of the land and water, — the pasture for their cattle, and the fishing in the rivers, the lakes, and the sea. These natural products are as abundant in Iceland as in Norway ; and the butter, cheese, wool, dried meat, fish, oil, feathers, skins, the wadmál or coarse woollen cloth, and the coarse linen spun and woven in their households, would be more in demand, more readily exchangeable, and of higher comparative value in former times, than such Icelandic products are now. With the surplus of such articles beyond their own consumption the Icelanders could supply their own most pressing wants. These were for corn and wood — articles of first necessity, which did not admit of the population sinking into indolence and apathy in providing them. An intercourse and regular trade with England and Denmark for meal and malt, and with Norway for wood, tools of metal, and other necessities of life, must have existed from the first years of the colonisation of Iceland. The Icelanders had consequently from the first more easy and regular opportunities of visiting foreign countries, and returning again to their own, than the natives of any other country in the north in those ages. They appear also to have traded without molestation, and never to have molested others. No Icelandic viking is mentioned in the sagas, even in the ages when a viking cruise was

deemed an honourable occupation. Iceland men are mentioned in the sagas, occasionally, as being in the service of vikings of Norway, as hired men; but no long-ship, or viking belonging to Iceland, is mentioned. The necessity of trading in peace across the sea, and of giving no pretext for capture or retaliation on Iceland vessels, may have been one cause for this remarkable abstinence from the favourite pursuit of the nobles of those ages in other northern countries. It could not be from the cause to which it is usually attributed, the want of wood in the country to build long-ships. The Icelanders had to buy merchant ships in Norway of a size to cross the sea, and appear to have had them in abundance; and the same class of people who fitted out viking expeditions in other countries could have purchased long-ships as easily as ships of burden. Their neighbours in the Feroe Islands were equally destitute of wood; yet they had a very celebrated viking, Sigmund Breestesen. The Orkney Islands had their Swein, a renowned viking, so late as the 12th century. But in none of the sagas in which the exploits of these vikings are related, is there any mention of any Iceland viking at any period. The fair inference is, that the men who emigrated from Norway to Iceland, and who were of the class and had the means to fit out long-ships for piracy, were men more advanced in civilisation and intelligence, and of higher principle, than men of the same class in that age in the other northern countries. In all the sagas there appears a kind of reluctance to dwell upon or approve of that part of the hero's life passed in viking expeditions, or in "gathering property" by piracy. One imagines, at least, that in the Saga of Olaf Trygvesson, of Olaf the Saint, and of other great chiefs, the saga-man shows a disposition to hurry over this part of their lives, to throw it into the years of extreme youth, and not to approve himself of that part of his



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tale. The comparatively safe intercourse which the Icelanders undoubtedly had with other countries gave them a higher education, that is, the means of acquiring a greater stock of information on what was doing in other countries, than any other people of those times. When we consider that these Icelandic colonists were connected by the *udal* law of succession with the principal families and estates in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, England, and France, and were deeply interested in the conquests, revolutions, battles, or changes going on, and in which their friends and relations were the chief actors, we can understand that an historical spirit must have grown up in such a population — a great desire to know, and a great talent to remember and relate. Heritable interests and rights of families in Iceland were involved in what was going on in Normandy and Northumberland as much as in Drontheim; and the consideration in which the *scald* or *saga-man* who could give accounts of such events was held, may not be exaggerated in the sagas. In a community of such colonists, the class of *scalds* remembering and relating past transactions was an essential element, and must have been held in the highest honour. To return home to Iceland appears, indeed, to have been the end which the most favoured *scald* at the courts of kings proposed to himself. From their opportunities of visiting various countries, the Icelandic *scalds* were undoubtedly the educated men of the times when books did not in any way contribute to intelligence, or to forming the mind; but only extensive intercourse with men, and the information gathered from it. Having by the lapse of time no family feuds even with the people of Norway, no injuries, national or private, to avenge or to fear vengeance for from others, the *Icelander* could travel through other countries on private or public affairs with a degree of personal security which people of the

highest rank and power belonging to the country were strangers to in those unhappy ages. This advantage was sufficient of itself to make them a useful class in every court. They were not only neutral men in every strife; but, from their travel and experience, men of intelligence, prudence, and safe counsel, compared to men of no intellectual culture at all; and acquainted only with arms and violence. They had also the advantage of speaking in its greatest purity what was the court language in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, England, and at Rouen.\* The moral influence which the scalds enjoyed, as counsellors and personal friends and advisers of many of the kings, may not be exaggerated in the sagas; for it appears to be that which knowledge and education would naturally obtain amidst ignorance and barbarity. The class of scalds and saga-men, supported by intellectual labour in the north of Europe, may not have been very numerous at any one time; but owing to the favourable circumstances peculiar to the Icelanders, the profession centred in Iceland. We hear of no scalds of any other country, not even of Norway. All the intellectual labour of the kind required in the north of Europe was derived from Iceland. We may surely reckon the population in the north of Europe using a common tongue in those times,—of Scandinavia, Denmark, Jutland, and Schleswig; of the kingdom of Northumberland, East Anglia, and of parts of Mercia; of Normandy, in some proportion of its inhabitants; of the Hebrides and Isle of Man, in some proportion; of the Orkney, Shetland, and Feroe Islands, altogether,—to have

\* Normandy, it is to be always remembered in reading the history of those ages, was conquered, but not colonised, as Iceland and Northumberland were colonised, by the introduction of a totally new population, with their own laws, manners, and language. In Normandy, so early as the time of Duke Richard, the second in descent from Rolf Ganger, his son had to be sent to Bayeux to acquire the pure northern language, it having been already corrupted at the court.



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amounted to two millions of people. Small as the demand might be for intellectual gratification among these two millions, yet they were scattered over countries widely apart, and they used a common tongue, and had a real and effective relationship of families among them all; and the desire for news of what was doing in other lands, and for narratives of events which might be of importance in their family interests, would be sufficient to give an impulse to such a small population as that of Iceland, which never exceeded sixty or sixty-four thousand people, to give employment to all the surplus talent of such a population, and to keep up a literary tone, if it may be so called, of the public mind in such a handful of people. Men of any talent would naturally endeavour to qualify themselves for that profession in which several, and probably a considerable number, attained distinction, wealth, or high consideration. It was better than the chance of advantage from embarking as a private seaman or man-at-arms in viking forays and cruises under a sea-king; better than staying at home tending cattle, cutting peats, making hay, and catching and curing fish. The same motives operate in the same way at this day in the social economy of Iceland. The youth of talents and ambition study, come to the university of Copenhagen, become often men of very great attainments and learning, and with as few chances or examples before them of substantial reward for their labours as the scalds, their predecessors, could have had. The impulse to mind in any community being once given, either by accidental or physical circumstances, the movement in the same direction goes on, and seems to be permanent—never to cease. The perpetuity of intellectual movement, of the direction of mind and mental energy in the same way, even when laws, government, and all social arrangements, and even religion itself, are altered,

and the old forms not even remembered, is one of the most singular and interesting of the phenomena in the nature of man. It is strikingly illustrated in Iceland. The Icelandic youth prepare themselves now for a learned profession, as the scalds did 800 years ago, exactly from the same intellectual impulse, although in a different field; and the movement of the public mind towards intellectual occupation appears to have remained in this small community unchanged, undiminished, and only less visible because it is not now the only community in the north with the same movement. The continued tendency of mind in Iceland to literary pursuits appears when we compare them, in numbers not exceeding at present 56,000 individuals, with any equal number of the British population. The Icelanders had a printing-press among them in the first half of the 16th century; and many works in Latin and in Icelandic have been printed at Skalholt, Hólen, and other places. The counties of Orkney and Shetland, with an equal population,—of Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, with probably double the population,—have not at this day any such intellectual movement, or any press that could print a book, or any book produced within themselves to print. The whole Celtic population in Scotland, since the beginning of time, never produced in their language a tithe of the literature that has been composed and printed in Icelandic by the Icelanders for their own use within this century. The modern literature of Iceland, or even its saga literature, may not be considered by the critic of a very high class or value, or of merit in itself; but, in judging of the intellectuality of a people, the philosopher will regard its amount and diffusion as of much more importance than its quality. That belongs to the author, and measures merely the genius and talents of the individual: the amount and diffusion measure the intellectual con-



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dition of the society. Apply this measure to any town or county in Great Britain of 56,000 inhabitants, and we will find little reason to boast of a more advanced intellectual condition among us than that which the Icelanders appear to retain at this day from bygone times, when an intellectual character was impressed on the public mind in their small community by the scalds; and little reason to believe that the monkish historians of the Anglo-Saxons, in the same ages in which the scalds flourished, have left more deep or influential traces of their literature in the parts of Europe in which they were the only men engaged in those ages in intellectual occupation, than the scalds have done in the narrow circle in which alone they could have influence on posterity.

In these observations on the saga literature, nothing is said of or allowed for the Runic writing inscribed on rocks, monumental stones, wooden staves, drinking cups of horn or metal, arms, or ornaments, for which at one period a high antiquity was claimed. It seems to be now admitted that a Runic character, apparently borrowed from the Gothic and Roman, and adapted to the material on which it was usually cut, viz. hard stone or wood, by converting all the curves of the letters into straight lines for the facility of cutting, has existed from a very early age among the Northmen. It would, indeed, be absurd to suppose that an intelligent people roaming over the world, who had appeared in the Mediterranean in the days of Charlemagne, and had a regular body of troops, the Væringers, in the pay of the Greek Emperors at Constantinople, should not have adopted, or imitated, what would be useful at home, as far as applicable to their means. This appears to have been precisely the extent to which Runic writing was applied. From want of means to write,—that is, the want of the parchment, paper, ink, and writing tools, — the writing in Runic

was almost entirely confined to short monumental inscriptions recording the death of an individual, the name of the person who erected the stone to his memory, and also the name of the person who cut the letters — a proof that the use of the Runic characters was rare, and confined to a few. Of these Runic inscriptions, of which a thousand or more have been examined by antiquaries, few can be placed before the introduction of Christianity in the 11th century. The sign of the cross may, in the dreams of the zealous antiquary, appear the sign of Thor's hammer; but there is no evidence that the pagans used such a symbol, and the obvious interpretation of such a mark upon a tombstone is that it belongs to the age of Christianity. Torfæus, whose antiquarian zeal was tempered with a love of truth, and whose antiquarian knowledge has not been surpassed, says\* not only that the Runic inscriptions throw no light upon history, but are so intricate and confused, that what you may imagine you catch by the eye you cannot by the understanding; and in proof of his remark he refers to conflicting interpretations of the two greatest Runic antiquaries, Wormius and Verelius, of the meaning of Runic inscriptions, on which they both agree perfectly as to the strokes or incisions in the stone. Bartholinus† also says, in his *Danish Antiquities*, that, excepting four or five, none of these Runic inscriptions are in any way illustrative of history, and in general are so obscure that the names of the persons for whom the stones are erected can scarcely be extracted, and much is matter of mere conjecture. The opinions of these great antiquaries are singularly confirmed by the recent discovery made by chemical science, that one of the few Runic inscriptions supposed to be illustrative of history, — one upon a rock

\* Torfæus, *Series Regum Dan.* cap. viii.† Bartholinus, *Antiq. Dan.* l. i. cap. 9.



at Hoby, near Runamoe, in the Swedish province of Bleking, which is mentioned by Saxo Grammaticus as being, in his time (namely, about 1160), considered inexplicable, and which modern Runic scholars interpreted a few years ago to relate to the battle of Braavalle fought about the year 680, — is in reality no inscription at all, but a mere *lusus naturæ*; merely veins of one substance interspersed in the body of another substance, and forming marks which resemble Runic letters in the fancy of the antiquary, but which is an appearance in rocks of granitic formation with veins of chlorite interspersed, not unfamiliar to the eye of the mineralogist. Another of the Runic inscriptions, supposed to be illustrative of history, is that on a rock called Korpeklinte, in the island of Gotland, which, in Runic characters, told that

“ Aar halfridium tusanda utdrog Helge med Gutenum sinum ; ”

that is, “ in the year half three thousand, — videlicet, two thousand five hundred, — went out Helge with his Goths.” This inscription must be, as Wormius himself admits, a gross fabrication ; for the pagan Northmen did not reckon by years, but by winters, and could have known nothing of the computation of time from the creation of the world, which is derived from the Bible, and was unknown to them in the year of the world 2500. But before the year 1636 somebody had been at the trouble to attempt to impose upon the world by this inscription in Runic letters, although in modern language, and of modern conception. We may believe that inscriptions on stones in memory of the dead, — rude calendars cut in wood, — charms on amulets, rings, shields, or swords, — and tokens of recognition to be sent by messengers to accredit them to friends at a distance, may have existed among the Northmen from their first arrival in Europe ; and Odin himself may have invented or used the Runic

character in this way: but we have no ground for believing that any distinct use of writing\*, *currente calamo*, applicable to the transmission of historical events, was known before the introduction of Christianity, and of letters with Christianity, in the 11th century, or was diffused before the diffusion of church establishments over the north. If the Runic had been a written character among the Northmen of the 9th century, it must have been transported to Iceland, in which the first settlers were not of the rude and ignorant, but of the most cultivated of their age in Norway; but few, if any, Runic inscriptions of a date prior to the introduction of Christianity are found in Iceland. If they had possessed the use of written characters, as they had unquestionably a literature in Iceland, it would be absurd to believe that they had not applied the one to the other; but for two hundred and forty years—that is, until the time of Are—should have committed the sagas to memory, instead of to parchment or paper. Are himself would have used the Runic character, if writing Runic had been diffused among the Northmen; and although no manuscript of the time of Are exists, but only early copies of his writings, yet among the mass of sagas in manuscript some must have been in Runic characters, if Runic writing had been diffused among the Icelanders. No Runic manuscript, however, on parchment or paper, of unquestionable antiquity and authenticity, has ever been discovered. A fragment, entitled “*Historia Hialmari Regis Biorn-*

\* A remarkable proof how little Runic was known, or used, is, that a certain Odd Snabiornsson gave notice to Snorro Sturleson of the conspiracy against his life in September, 1240, in Runic; but neither Snorro (certainly not one of the unlearned of his age in the saga or Icelandic literature), nor any of those with him at the time, could read the Runic characters; and Snorro in consequence fell a victim to the conspiracy, and was murdered in his house on the 22d September, 1240. — *Schoning, Pref. to Heimskringla.*



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landiæ atque Thulemarkiæ ex Fragmento Runici MS. literis recentioribus descripta cum genuina versione Johannis Peringskoldi," without date, place of publication, or reference to where the original Runic manuscript on skin or paper is to be found, is evidently a translation of a part of the Saga of Hjalmar into Runic letters, for the purpose of imposing on the public, and is to be classed with the Korpe Klinte inscription. The controversy concerning the antiquity and historical value of the Runic character and inscriptions ran high in the latter half of the 17th century, and unjustifiable means were used to establish opinions as facts. This fragment of ancient Runic writing on parchment was ascribed by Rudbeck to the 7th century, by Stiernman to the 10th, by Biorner to the 11th or 12th. It was incorporated into Hicks's *Thesaurus* as a specimen of written Runic. But Archbishop Benzelius, Celsius the elder and Celsius the younger, Erichson, and Ihre, antiquaries of great note and authority in Sweden, expressed their doubts of the authenticity of this fragment at the time it appeared,—about 1690; and Nardin, in an *Academical Dissertation*, published at Upsal 1774, proves from the language that this Runic manuscript is an impudent forgery.

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## OF THE RELIGION OF THE NORTHMEN.

IT must strike every reader of saga literature how very little we can gather from the sagas of the doctrines and usages of the paganism which existed among the Northmen down to a comparatively late period, and for five hundred years after the cognate Anglo-Saxon branch, both on the Continent and in England, had been entirely Christianised, and had been long under the full influence of the church and priesthood. The Anglo-Saxons landed in England about the year 450. They appear at that time to have had a religion cognate to, if not identical with, that of the Northmen who landed in England three hundred years afterwards, or about the year 787. Odin, Thor, Friggia, were among their deities ; Yule and Easter were religious festivals ; and the eating of horse-flesh was prohibited in a council held in Mercia in 785, as “not done by Christians in the East”—which implies that among the Anglo-Saxons also it was a pagan custom, derived from their ancestors. In about a century after the landing of the Saxons, viz. about 550, the Heptarchy was in existence ; and in about another century, viz. about 640, Christianity was generally established among them. It was not till a century after their first expeditions, about 787, that the pagan Northmen made a complete and permanent conquest of the kingdom of Northumberland, which they held under independent Danish princes until 953, when independent earls, only nominally subject to the English crown, succeeded ; and even at the compilation of Domesday

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Book by William the Conqueror, the lands of Northumberland, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and part of Lancashire, are omitted, as not belonging to England. Of these Anglo-Northmen the conversion cannot well be fixed to a date, because they had no scruple apparently of nominally adopting Christianity when it suited their interests; and they appear to have had no desire to convert, or to be converted, in their predatory expeditions. As late, however, as the beginning of the 11th century, the Northmen and their chiefs were still pagans. Swein, indeed, and his son Canute, who in 1017 became sole monarch of England, were zealous Christians; but they and their contemporaries, Olaf Tryggvesson and Olaf the Saint, and the small kings in Norway, were born pagans; and their conversion, and the introduction of the Christian religion and religious institutions into Norway and its dependencies, cannot be dated higher than the first half of the 11th century. It seems surprising that we know so little of a pagan religion existing so near our times, — of this last remnant of paganism among the European people, existing in vigour almost five hundred years after Christianity and the Romish church establishment were diffused in every other country! What we know of it is from the Edda compiled by Sæmund the priest, a contemporary of Are who compiled the historical sagas. Sæmund was born in 1057, and had travelled and studied in Germany and France. He lived consequently in an age when many who had been bred in and understood the religion of their forefathers were still living, and in a country in which, if any where, its original doctrines and institutions would be preserved in purity.

If we may take the account of Tacitus as correct, this ancient religion of the Germanic race must have been eminently spiritual, and free from idolatry. He says, in chapter 35. "*De Moribus Germanorum*," that

they held “*regnator omnium Deus, cetera subjecta atque parentia;*” and, in chapter 9., “*ceterum nec cohibere parietibus Deos, neque in ullam humani oris speciem assimilare ex magnitudine cœlestium arbitrantur.*” The polytheism of the ancient Romans, and the saint worship of the Christian church of Rome, and probably the infirmity of the human mind and language requiring, in an uncultivated state, material forms to represent abstract ideas, had in the course of ten centuries, between Tacitus and Sæmund, undoubtedly mingled with and moulded the forms and ideas of the original religion of this race. Idolatry, in every shape and country, is the result of a struggle of the human mind to attain fixed ideas in religion. It is universal at a certain stage of the development of the intellectual powers of man, because that stage is as necessary to be passed through as infancy in the individual, or barbarism in a society of human beings. A love for religious certainty and truth is at the bottom even of the grossest idolatry, if we analyse it rightly. Idolatry is an attempt to individualise the conception of Almighty power, under a strong sense of its existence—to make it more possible, or more easy for the mind, in a certain stage of development, to dwell upon and entertain some present conception of that power. Idols should be considered by the Christian philosopher as the imperfect words of a much more pure religious sentiment than our churchmen generally suppose — words different, indeed, from spoken or written words, but intended to convey the same conception, and used with the same sentiment by the ignorant idolater as the most poetic imagery and most eloquent language of our pulpit orator. The most absurd idols of the Hindu or the South Sea islander, sent home to the museum of the Missionary Society as memorials of the spiritual blindness of the heathens at this day—idols with four or five arms



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and wings, griffin-footed, made up, in short, of emblems of all real or imaginary living beings known to the ignorant idolater, — are in reality words of which these absurdly combined parts are the syllables, or rather are the expression of a sentiment of which these are the words. We smile or shudder in holy horror at these uncouth representations, forgetting, in the pride of our philosophy and theology, that the sentiment is the same — viz. the innate feeling of divine power; and perhaps not less intensely felt in the mind which expresses it in these shapes, than in the mind which expresses it in the shapes of written or spoken language. It is but the way of expressing it, not what is intended to be expressed, that is different. Idol-language and word-language have the same object — namely, to express the impression or sentiment of almighty power and divine existence innate in the human mind; and who shall say that we approach nearer to the understanding and expressing of this almighty power and divine nature, “which passeth understanding,” with our alphabet, or written or spoken words, than the ignorant idolater, without words in his language to express his ideas, in his carved and painted idol-language? Each means may be the best adapted for different states and stages of the development of the human mind. It has a stage in its development at which, in a highly civilised country, a little black stroke with a dot over it presents to the philosopher, and as he believes in the most clear and distinct manner, all that mind knows or can express of self-existence, of individuality — of I. A wooden idol, representing something like to but different from man, presents to the mind of the pagan all that it can conceive, or with its means express, of superhuman divine existence. Is not this a mere defect in the alphabet used? Is not the real inward sentiment in the mind of man, with regard to the

Divinity, the same, precisely the same, whatever be the mode of expressing it? But the pagan, the idolater, the ignorant even of the Catholic church, worship these stocks and stones; and instead of regarding them as signs only shadowing forth what, in its intellectual state, the human mind cannot otherwise express of its religious sentiments, take the signs for the things they represent, and worship them as such. So do we, in all our pride of knowledge and intellectual development. We too worship our signs — our words. Let any man set himself to the task of examining the state of his knowledge on the most important subjects, divine or human, and he will find himself a mere word-worshipper; he will find words without ideas or meaning in his mind venerated, made idols of — idols different from those carved in wood or stone only by being stamped with printers' ink on white paper. This is perhaps the just view which the philosopher and the humble Christian should take, of all the natural forms of religion which have ever existed beyond the pale of the religion revealed to us in the Scriptures.

This necessity of man's expressing in his uncultivated mental condition, by the material visible means of idols, the innate sentiment of religion which he has no other language for, will, if it do not reconcile, render very unimportant the various speculations of antiquaries relative to Odin. Some find that Odin was a real personage, who, on the fall of Mithridates, migrated with his nation from the borders of the Tanais, to escape the Roman yoke, about seventy years before our era. This is the opinion of Snorro Sturleson; and, as far as regards the Asiatic origin of the Northmen, it is confirmed by all the traditions, mythological or historical, of the scalds. Torfæus, reckoning from scaldic genealogies, finds that there must have been an older Odin; and if we are to admit that the god called Odin



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was a real historical personage, it is impossible to fix, from the traditionary genealogies of those who claimed to be his descendants, at what period he lived. There are no fixed points in the history of the North before the middle of the 9th century, when, about 853 or 854, the birth of Harald Haarfager, who lived to 931, is determined from contemporary history. The scaldic genealogies make this king the twenty-eighth in descent from Odin. If we allow eleven years to each reign, which is the average length of the reigns in the Heptarchy, we must place Odin 550 years after the Christian era. If we take Sir Isaac Newton's computation of eighteen years as the average length of reigns, we bring Odin to the year 368 of our era. If we take lives instead of reigns, we must believe twenty-seven successive persons to have lived so long as to average thirty-five years each, in order to place this god called Odin seventy years before our era. When we turn to the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, we find it still more difficult to place Odin. King Alfred was born 849, or about four years before Harald Haarfager, and is only twenty-three generations from the Odin or Wodin of Hengist and Horsa. Offa, king of Mercia, who lived about 793, is only fifteen generations; Ida, king of Northumberland, who lived about 547, only nine generations; and Ella, king of Northumberland, who lived about 559, is eleven generations from Odin or Wodin. The reasonable view is that of Pinkerton, which has more recently been developed by Grimm and other German writers on Scandinavian mythology, — that Odin, Wodin, Godin, were names of the Supreme Divine Power among the Germanic race; and that Thor, Fryggia, &c. were merely impersonations of divine attributes; that none of these were ever human heroes, deified by their contemporaries or descendants. It may, indeed, be reasonably doubted whether, in any age or country,

any such deification of mortals known to be human beings—any such hero-worship as classical schoolmen and antiquaries suppose, ever did take place among any portion of the human race; for it is contrary to the natural tendency and movement of the human mind. It is a trite observation, that no people have ever been discovered by the traveller in so rude and barbarous a state as to be without any sentiment of a Divinity; and that this universal sentiment is more distinctive of the species man even than his reasoning powers,—for in these the elephant, the dog, the beaver, the bee, partake, and almost vie with human beings in the lowest condition of humanity. The writers who make the most of this trite observation in support of natural religion overlook a powerful argument for the truth of revealed religion, in a sentiment equally innate, and as widely diffused among men in a natural state. No people have ever been discovered by the traveller or the antiquary without a strong and distinct impression of the incarnation, past, present, or to come, as well as the existence, of the Divinity. Our divines turn away from this argument in support of revealed religion. They assume that, in the dark ages of every nation, individuals have taken to themselves the attributes and honours of divinity—have imposed themselves upon their contemporaries as gods, or have been taken by their contemporaries or their posterity for gods; and in this schoolboy way great divines, historians, and philosophers think of, tell of, and account for, idolatry and paganism among rude uncivilised nations. But they do not apply to the subject two universally and permanently ruling principles of the human mind in every stage of development: first, that there is no deceiving a man's own consciousness; and, second, that if a man cannot deceive himself, he cannot deceive others. Alexander the Great, or Odin, or the Roman em-



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perors, or the Roman pontiffs, may have placed themselves at the head of the priesthood or church, and may have allowed their flatterers to place their statues among those of the gods, and to append the title of Divus or Saint to their names; but in all this church trickery these men no more believed themselves gods, than their people believed them to be of divine nature. The human mind, in a state of sanity, never was discovered in so low a condition of the reasoning power as to approach to any such conclusions. As to a rude and ignorant people elevating their deceased leaders, kings, heroes, to a place among their deities, it is the last thing a rude and ignorant people would think of; for in a rude and ignorant state the natural movement of the human mind is to detract from, not to elevate, the merits of others; and the valued endowments of body or mind in such a state—strength, beauty, valour, or even wisdom in the narrow range of their public or private affairs—are more generally diffused than the intellectual attainments valued by men in a civilised state, and are neither so high nor so rare as to be deified, instead of being subjects of envy and detraction, or of emulation. In no state, barbarous or civilised, are men disposed to yield superiority, and allow divine honours and attributes to mortals who, as natural self-love or vanity will whisper to every one, are not much superior,—not divinely superior, to themselves. The natural movement and tendency of the human mind are equally opposed in every stage of development, in every state of society, to any such hero-worship. Divines overlook the weight of this argument for revealed religion drawn from natural religion—that it is not from man upwards, but from the Divinity downwards, that this universal sentiment of an incarnation proceeds; that the existence of a Supreme Being is not a sentiment more innate in the human mind, than that of the in-

carnation of the Supreme Being at some period, past, present, or future; that it is not Jupiter, Mars, or Odin who were men or heroes set up by their fellow-men as gods to be worshipped, but that it is the innate and universal sentiment of the human mind which has set them up. What the mind cannot grasp in one conception, or express in one expression, it necessarily divides; and thus groups of divine attributes have been impersonated as distinct deities, individualised, named, incarnated, by an irresistible instinct to find an incarnation of Divine Power; and these distinct individualisations produced in a rude state of the human mind by the poverty of language, have been made historical personages of. But, looking at the natural movement of the human mind it may be reasonably doubted whether any historical personage, who really lived as a mortal man, was ever made a god of by his fellow-men. The Christian philosopher, who considers the expected Messiah of the Jews, the incarnation of Jupiter, of Odin, and the living incarnation of a Lama among a great proportion of the present population of Asia, will not hesitate to place the accomplished advent of our Saviour upon the same innate sentiment of the human mind as the existence itself of Supreme Divine Power. Both are universal innate sentiments of the mind of man. The divines and Christian philosophers who are not content with resting the existence of a Supreme Divine Power upon the innate sentiment of the human mind, upon the same ground as the proof of our self-existence rests, but who seek to prove the existence of a Supreme Divine Power from the design, contrivance, and wisdom manifested in the material objects around us,—Paley, and the Bridgewater Bequest writers, who undertook, for a prize of two or three hundred pounds given by an English lord, to prove to all and sundry of God's creatures the existence of a God from the



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mechanism of the hand, the eye, the movements of the planetary bodies, and other natural objects without us, and not from that which is within us, — who seek to prove the spiritual from the material, and not from the spirituality existing and innate in every man's mind, — are not so immeasurably distant from gross paganism as they suppose. They and the pagan, — the Odin-worshipper, or Jupiter-worshipper, or whatever he may be, — proceed upon the very same material grounds, and the pagan appears the closer and stricter reasoner of the two. An ignorant and barbarous people may be wrong in the grounds from which they reason, but are seldom wrong in the reasoning process itself. Their conclusions are usually very correct, only drawn from false premises. They mark the thunder-bolt, and conclude there is a Supreme Divine Cause — a thunder-maker. They mark the ocean, — now calm and smiling, now shaking the earth with its fury, — and conclude there must be an ocean god. This is precisely the reasoning of the Paley and of the Bridgewater Bequest philosophy. The manifest design, contrivance, adaptation of means to an end in a watch, prove the existence of a watch-maker — of the hand, of a hand-maker — of the eye, of an eye-maker — of the world, of a world-maker. But from these material-world grounds these material philosophers cannot deduce, in strict reasoning, the unity of the Supreme Divine Power; still less the moral perfections of the Supreme Divine Power. The pagan proceeds upon exactly the same grounds in his religious belief; but reasons much more correctly and logically from the same material grounds, when he concludes there is a separate Divine Power for each separate class of material objects — a god of thunder, a Neptune, and so on; and concludes, from the material-world grounds, that the superiority of the intelligence that made it, above his which perceives it, is

in degree and power, not in kind; and his material-world grounds give him no reason, in his strict reasoning process, to conclude that the divine intelligence, or intelligences, which he deduces from them, are exempt from the passions or frailties of the intelligences he is acquainted with. He attributes, therefore, to his gods, the passions and motives of men; and the Christian philosophers, who reason from the same grounds to prove the existence of the Deity, do not reason half so correctly as the pagan; for these grounds will carry human reason no farther than the pagan goes, — and there Paley, prize-essay divinity, and paganism stick together neck and neck. The material-world grounds prove the existence only of creative power. The goodness, mercy, omniscience, all the attributes of God, are in the innate sentiment of the human mind of an existence of Supreme Divine Power; and upon this innate sentiment or spirituality the material-world argument has to fall back, to rescue itself from mere paganism. The distinctive characteristics of paganism and Christianity are, that the former rests entirely on material-world grounds — and from these grounds reasons strictly and correctly, its conclusions being correctly drawn, but from imperfect premises; the latter rests on the spiritual evidence of the innate sentiment of a Divine Existence, of which every human mind is as conscious as of its own existence — and on Revelation. Paley, the Bridgewater Bequest philosophers, and all that school of Christian reasoners, have, in fact, done infinite mischief to religion, by throwing out of view the innate sense, the spirituality of the human mind, on which pure religion is founded; and by resting its evidences on material external objects, from which the deist, the polytheist, the Odin-worshipper, if such now existed, might draw conclusions in their own favour more strictly logical than this kind of Christian rea-



soner can; for divine power, and no other of the attributes of the Deity, can be deduced from the material world without a reference to the intellectual, to the human mind, and to the inspired writings. These philosophers have lowered the tone of religion by their evidences drawn from the material world; and their evidences do not, in strict reasoning, prove their conclusions.

Of the doctrine, institutions, and forms of the religion of Odin, we have but few memorials. There are two Eddas. The older Edda is that which was composed or compiled by Sæmund, and of it only three fragments are extant. The one is called the "Voluspa," or the Prophecy of Vola. In the Scotch words "spæ-wife," and in the English word "spy," we retain words derived from the same root, and with the same meaning, as the word "spa" of the Voluspa. The second fragment is called "Havamal," or the High Discourse; the third is the Magic, or Song of Odin. The Voluspa gives an account by the prophetess of the actions and operations of the gods; a description of chaos; of the formation of the world; of giants, men, dwarfs; of a final conflagration and dissolution of all things; and of the future happiness of the good, and punishment of the wicked. The Havamal is a collection of moral and economical precepts. The Song of Odin is a collection of stanzas in celebration of his magic powers. The younger Edda, composed 120 years after the older, by Snorro Sturleson, is a commentary upon the Voluspa; illustrating it in a dialogue between Gylfe, the supposed contemporary of Odin, under the assumed name of Ganglr, and three divinities,—Har (the High), Jafnhar (equal to the High), and Thriddi (the Third),—at Asgard (the abode of the gods, or the original Asiatic seat of Odin), to which Gylfe had gone to ascertain the cause of the superiority of the Asiatics. Both the Eddas

appear to have been composed as hand-books to assist in understanding the names of the gods, and the allusions to them in the poetry of the scalds; not to illustrate the doctrine of the religion of Odin. The absurd and the rational are consequently mingled. Many sublime conceptions, and many apparently borrowed by Sæmund and Snorro from Christianity,—as for instance the Trinity with which Gangler converses,—are mixed with fictions almost as puerile as those of the classical mythology. The genius of Snorro Sturleson shines even in these fables. In the grave humour with which the most extravagantly gigantic feats of Thor at Utgaard are related and explained, Swift himself is not more happy; and one would almost believe that Swift had the adventures of Thor and the giant Utgaard Loke before him when he wrote of Brobdignac. The practical forms or modes of worship in the religion of Odin are not to be discovered from the Eddas, nor from the sagas which the two Eddas were intended to illustrate. It is probable that much has been altered to suit the ideas of the age in which they were committed to writing, and of the scribes who compiled them. Christianity in Scandinavia seems, in the 11th century, to have consisted merely in the ceremony of baptism, without any instruction in its doctrines. The wholesale conversion of whole districts by Olaf Tryggvesson, and King Olaf the Saint, was evidently the mere ceremony of baptism. On the eve of the battle of Stiklestad the mere acceptance and performance of that ceremony, without any instruction, was considered by Saint Olaf himself a sufficient Christianising of the pagan robbers, whose assistance he refused unless they would consent to be Christians. From the high importance attached to the mere ceremony without reference to its meaning, it is not improbable that the Christian transcribers, or relators of the historical sagas, may have thought it decent to



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make the ancestors of the kings or great personages they are treating of, although they had lived in pagan times, partake of the important Christian ceremony which of itself had, in the rude conception of the early Christian converts, a saving power; for we find on the birth of every child who is to become a king, and leave descendants, that "water was poured over the child, and a name given him;" that he was baptized, in short, although living in the Odin religion. Harald Haarfager is stated in his saga "to have had water poured over him, and a name given him," and his son Hakon also, who succeeded him; but we hear nothing of any such baptism of Eric Blodöxe, or of any other of his sons, nor of any whose descendants did not succeed to power as kings. It may reasonably be doubted if any such ceremony was used in the Odin religion on the birth of a child; because these pagans certainly exposed their children — a practice not consistent with dedicating them by a ceremony analogous to baptism to the service of their gods in any way; and if it had no meaning in their religion, it could not be practised, unless in imitation of the Christian ceremony. Marriage also appears not to have been celebrated with any religious form. Polygamy was as fully tolerated as in Asia. Harald Haarfager had nine wives, with several concubines. Saint Olaf had concubines besides his wife, and was succeeded by a natural son; for illegitimacy, where it is not founded on any religious element in the marriage tie, is not considered a natural or just disqualification from inheritance. Marriage appears with the Odin worshippers to have been altogether a civil tie, subject, consequently, to the disruptions which civil circumstances might produce or excuse.

The churches or temples of Odin appear to have had no consecrated order of men like a priesthood set apart for administering in religious rites. In the

historical sagas, in the accounts of the direct collisions between Hakon Athelstan's foster-son, or Olaf the Saint, with the worshippers of Odin, in the temples at Mære, and in Gudbrandsdal, no mention is made of the presence of any priests. Bonders of eminence, great people, and even district kings, are mutilated or put to death — suffer martyrdom in the cause of Odinism; but no word is there to be found of any man in sacerdotal function. Three great religious festivals appear to have been held by the Odin worshippers. One, in honour of Thor, was held in midwinter, about the turn of the day; and from coinciding nearly with the Christmas of the Christian church, the name of Yule, derived from Yiolner, one of Odin's names, and the festivity and merry-making of the pagan celebration, were amalgamated with the Christian commemoration. The second, in honour of Friggia, was held at the first quarter of the second moon after the beginning of the year\*; and the third, in honour of Odin, in the beginning of spring. The convenience of having snow to travel on, and the leisure and facility of travelling while snow covered the ground, have probably been the cause of all these pagan festivals being crowded together in the winter half-year, or between harvest and seed-time. They were not solely nor principally religious festivals, but assemblies of the people at which the regular Things were held, business transacted, and fairs kept for bartering, and buying, and merry-making. An hereditary priesthood descended from the twelve diars, or drottars, or godars, who accompanied Odin from Asia, and who originally were judges as well as priests in the Things held at these great religious festivals, existed at the colonisation of Iceland, and down to the time of Snorro Sturleson himself, who was one of

\* The Northmen appear to have reckoned by winters, and the beginning of the year or winter from the 16th of October.



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those godars; but the sacerdotal function had become merged in the civil function of judge apparently long before the introduction of Christianity. The judicial functions and emoluments of judge descending by hereditary rights in certain families, as appertaining to their hereditary priesthood, could not be a popular institution, especially with no sacerdotal function to perform. True religion, as we see in Scotland and England, can scarcely maintain itself when it mixes up civil power or great wealth with the religious element in its establishment; and much less can a false religion. We may gather from the silence of the sagas on the point, that the godars had no sacerdotal or religious function in society; and did not, even in the earliest historical period, exist as priests, but as hereditary local judges only, each in his own godard or parish. At the Things at which Hakon Athelstan's foster-son, Olaf Tryggvesson, and Olaf the Saint, come in collision with the religion of Odin, and threaten and even put to death peasants and chiefs who adhere to Odinism, no priests or godars appear, or are spoken of. Their civil power, jurisdiction, and dues or emoluments, however, were derived from their hereditary succession to the priestly office in their respective godards; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that they, their supporters, and the religion on which they founded their rights, were not the popular side at the introduction of Christianity. Some indications may be perceived of its having been a political movement to adopt Christianity. The supporters of the old religion appear to have been the small kings, the rich bonders, and those who may reasonably be supposed to have been themselves godars, or connected with them. The support of Christianity, on the other hand, appears to have come from the people and the kings, and not from the kings alone. In Iceland, where the godars, with their civil powers, were trans-

planted from Norway by the first aristocratical settlers, and where Christianity had no royal supporters, the Thing of the people declared Christianity the lawful religion of the land. The institutions of Odinism, as well as its doctrines, were evidently become extinct as religion. The incompatible elements of civil power, wealth, and sacerdotal function, had lost all religious influence. The mixture is at this day as ineffective in its power over the human mind as it was in the 11th century, and in the Christian religion as it was in Odinism.

The only practices connected with religion mentioned in the sagas, at which a priesthood may have officiated, are sacrifices, at the three great festivals, of cattle, which were killed and feasted upon. The door-post, floor, and people are stated to have been sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice by a brush; but even this may be a fiction of the saga-maker, taken from the similar sprinkling of holy water by a brush in the Romish church. The best established of the religious practices of the Odin worshippers was the partaking of horse-flesh at those festivals, as commemorative of their ancestors. This practice was transplanted even to Iceland by the pagan settlers, and it held its ground there long after Christianity was adopted. As food, the horse never could have been reared in Iceland; and a religious or popular superstition only must have kept up such a custom there. The eating of horse-flesh at those festivals appears to have been held as decisive a test of paganism, as baptism of Christianity; and was punished by death in the 11th century by Saint Olaf. Public business, however, in the Things, and the ordinary business and pleasures of great country fairs, appear to have occupied the people at those festivals much more than any religious observances. Public worship under any form, or private or household devotion in the Odin religion,



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cannot be distinctly traced in the sagas. It is to be remembered however, that it might not have been thought right or safe by the saga-relater or saga-scribe to go far into an account of pagan observances, customs, or doctrines; in case of being considered himself as a believer in them. This may have affected considerably the fidelity of delivery of subjects, both religious and political, in the sagas, when they were still in a traditionary, not a written state. To some cause of this kind we must ascribe the trifling amount of information concerning the Odin worship to be found in the sagas. Religion may have been very little regarded, and a priesthood to support its observances and doctrines may have become a class connected only with civil power and emolument in their godards, and not thought of as belonging to religious service; but still a very strong religious spirit, among some at least of the pagan population, may be inferred from various details in the sagas. We read of many individuals in the reigns of Hakon Athelstan's foster-son, of Olaf Tryggvesson, and of Olaf the Saint, suffering the loss of fortune, mutilation, torture, and death, rather than give up their religion and submit to baptism. The religion of Odin had its martyrs in those days, and consequently must have had its doctrines, its devotions, its observances, its application to the mind of man in some way, its something to suffer for; but the sagas leave us in the dark with regard to the doctrines and observances of a religion for which men were willing to suffer. The machinery of the Odin mythology, the fables, allegories, meanings, and no-meanings of the Myths, however interesting, give us little or no information on the really important points,—the amount, quality, and social influence of the religion of the pagan Northmen immediately previous to their conversion to Christianity. The many names of places derived from Thor, and other names

given to the Supreme Being in their religion, which are still to be recognised, not only in Scandinavia, but in the north of Scotland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, show that the Northmen carried about with them some knowledge of their religion. The many allusions in the poems and songs of the scalds presuppose even a very intimate knowledge, on the part of the hearers, with a very complicated mythological nomenclature and system. Every one, from the lowest to the highest, must have been familiar with the names, functions, attributes, histories ascribed to these gods, or the scald would have been unintelligible. The great development of the intellectual powers among the Northmen, is indeed one of the most curious inferences to be drawn from the sagas. The descriptions of relative situations of countries, as East, West, North, or South, show generalised ideas and habits of thinking among their seafaring men; and the songs of the scalds, as those of the four who accompanied Saint Olaf at the battle of Stikleslad, seem to have been instantly seized and got by heart by the people,—the Biarkemal to have been instantly recognised, and thought applicable to their situation; and all the mythological, and to us obscure allusions, to have been understood generally in the halls in which the scalds recited or sung their compositions. Their religion must have been taught to them, although we find few traces of the religious establishment or social arrangements by which this was done.

The material remains of this religion of Odin are surprisingly few. We find in the North very few remains of temples;—no statues, emblems, images, symbols. Was it actually more spiritual than other systems of paganism, and therefore less material in its outward expression? If we consider the vast mounds raised in memory of the dead, and their high appreciation of their great men of former ages, we can



scarcely doubt but that the Northmen had higher notions of a future state than that of drinking ale in Valhalla.

The temples of Odin appear to have been but thinly scattered. We hear but of the one at Mære, and one at Lade, in the Drontheim district. A mound of earth alone remains at Mære which was the principal temple in the north of Norway: houses or halls, constructed of wood, for receiving the people who came together to eat, drink, and transact their business, have probably been all the structures. The temple at Upsal, or Upsalr (the up-halls or great halls), should have left some traces of former magnificence; for it was the residence of Odin himself, — the head-quarters, the Rome of the Odin religion; and in part, at least, was constructed of stone. Adam of Bremen, who lived about the time Christianity was first introduced into Sweden, namely, about 1064, says, “*Nobilissimum illa gens templum habet quod Upsala dicitur, non longe positum a Sictona civitate vel Birka. In hoc templo, quod totum ex auro paratum est, statua trium deorum veneratur populus, ita ut potentissimus eorum Thor in medio solum habeat triclinium, hinc et inde locum possident Woden et Fricco.*” In this passage from a contemporary Christian writer, who, as canon in the cathedral of Bremen, — under the bishop of which all the northern bishops stood at first, — must have had the best opportunity of becoming acquainted with the paganism of the North, Thor is stated to be seated on the throne as the supreme deity, and Odin and Friggia on each side as the minor deities in this pagan trinity; and the temple is stated to have been most noble, and adorned with gold. This temple was converted into a Christian church by Olaf the Swede about 1026; and Severin, an Englishman, was the first bishop. It was plundered of all its wealth, pagan and Christian, by King Stenkil, the son of King Ingve,

about the year 1085; and set fire to, and the stone walls only left. King Swerker I. restored it about 1139, and had it consecrated, and dedicated to Saint Laurence. This church appears to be the only building from which the extent at least, if not the magnificence of the temples of the pagan religion of the North, may be guessed at. It stands at Gamle Upsal (Old Upsal), about two miles north of the present town of Upsal, at the end of an extensive plain. Around Gamle Upsal—now consisting of this church, the minister's house, and two or three cottages—there are, according to Professor Verelius, in his notes on the Herverar Saga, tumuli to the number of six hundred and sixty-nine, besides many which have been levelled for cultivation. Reckoning the chain of such hillocks between the town of Upsal and Gamle Upsal, that, or even a greater number of those tumuli, may be conceded to the antiquary. Three of them, close to Gamle Upsal, are called Kongs-hogarne (the king's mounds); and one, oblong and flattened at the top, is Tings-hogen (the Thing's mound). The circumference of these mounds at the base is about three hundred and fifty paces, and the ascent on any side takes about seventy-five steps; so that the perpendicular height may be about ninety feet. It may also be conceded to the antiquary that these mounds are works of art, in so far that they have been reduced to regular shape by the hands of man, and have been used as places of interment, and still more as places for addressing a multitude from—the steep slopes close to each other admitting of great numbers sitting or standing within sight and hearing of a person addressing them. But whoever looks over this chain of sand-hills at the end of a plain which has been a lake or mire at no distant geological period, and with a mire or morass, now called Myrby Trask on the other side of it, will doubt whether these mounds be not originally of natural



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formation. He is struck at least with the conviction that not only in other countries, but in Sweden itself in particular, such formations of small ridges, and hillocks of gravel, sand, and rolled stones, upon a tongue of land which has originally divided two lakes, are of most frequent occurrence. Here, about Upsal, man has availed himself of a chain of mounds formed by nature; and, as a natural feature of ground, they account for the selection of Gamle Upsal in the earliest ages for the seat of government. With a lake or mire on each side, a narrow tongue of land dotted with small eminences behind each other gave the defenders a succession of strong posts to retire upon; and when missiles of very short range, and spear, sword, or battle-axe, and fighting hand to hand, were the only weapons and modes of fighting, the advantage of the higher ground was the great object in tactics. Gamle Upsal would be strong when the country was covered with wood, and the flat ground was a flooded morass. Of the old buildings, or town, no vestiges remain. Of the temple some of the walls are supposed to be included in the present church; and the old foundations have been traced by Rudbeck and Peringskiöld. Its extreme length has not exceeded one hundred and twenty feet; and the rough unhewn small stones of such walls as may possibly have been parts of the old structure do not tell of much architectural magnificence. The arches, whether of the pagan structure, or of the re-edification in 1139, are the round Saxon arch; and the whole is less than an ordinary parish church in England. An exterior line is said by antiquaries to have surrounded the building, and to have been the golden ring, chain, or serpent surrounding the temple of Odin in scaldic poetry; but this has had no foundation but in their fancy. A wooden palisade may, no doubt, have surrounded the temple, with the tops of it painted or

gilded ; for the Northmen appear to have been profuse in gilding, from the descriptions of their war vessels with gilded sides and prows ; and the scalds, in their symbolical inflated language, may have called this the serpent or dragon of Thor : but wood-work leaves no trace to posterity, and of stone-work no mark remains of any exterior circumvallation ; and it must be confessed that no trace remains in this locality of magnificence belonging to the paganism of the North. The gold chains, bracelets, armlets, anklets—too small for men, and of exquisite workmanship—which have been found in the North, and are preserved in the museums of Copenhagen, Christiania, and Stockholm, if they really belonged to northern idols, and were not rather the hoarded plunder of vikings gathered in more civilised or refined lands, or of Væringer returned from Constantinople, give a much higher idea of the splendour of the pagan religion of Odin than any architectural remains in Scandinavia. The sites of Sigtuna and of Birca—now Old Sigtuna, mentioned by Adam of Bremen in the above extract—are at the head of the Mælare lake, and would well deserve the careful examination of the antiquarian traveller. Walls are still standing there which have at least the interest of being among the oldest architectural fragments of the North.

The most permanent remains of the Odin religion are to be found in the usages and language of the descendants of the Odin worshippers. All the descendants of the great Saxon race retain the names of three days of the week — Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday—from the Odin religion. Tuesday, perhaps, or Diss-day, on which the offerings to Fate were made, and the courts of justice held, may belong also to the number. Yule is a pagan festival kept in the pagan way, with merriment and good cheer, all over the Saxon world. Beltan is kept on Midsummer-day, all



over the north of Europe, by lighting fires on the hills, and other festivities. It is but within these fifty years that trolls or sea-trows, and finmen and dwarfs, disappeared in the northern parts of Scotland. Mara (the nightmare) still rides the modern Saxon in his sleep, and under the same name nearly as she did the Yngling king Vanland; and the evil one in the Odin mythology, Nokke, keeps his ground, in the speech and invocations of our common people, as Old Nick, in spite of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian Knowledge. It is curious to observe how much more enduring ideas are than things—the intellectual than the material objects that mark the existence of the human species. Stone-work, and gold, and statues, and all material remains of this once general religion of the North, have disappeared from the face of the earth; yet words and ideas belonging to it remain.

It is remarkable that in the religion of Odin, as in that of Mahomet, women appear to have had no part in the future life. We find no allusion to any Valhalla for the female virtues. The Paradise of Mahomet and the Valhalla of Odin are the same; only the one offers sensual and the other warlike enjoyments to the happy. They both exclude females. This is not the only coincidence. Odin appears to have stood in the same relation to Thor in Odinism that Mahomet stands in to the Supreme Being in Mahometanism. The family of Mahomet, its semi-sacred character, and its rights, as successors to the prophet, to the throne and supremacy of temporal power over Mahometans, and with equal rights of succession in equal degrees of affinity to this sacred source, is in fact the Yngling dynasty of Odinism. If Mahomet had existed 400 years earlier, he would have been in modern history one of the Odins, perhaps *the* Odin, and the person or persons we call Odin would have merged in him. The coincidence between Odinism and Mahometanism

in the ideas of a future state, in the exclusion of females from it, in the hereditary succession of a family to sacred and temporal power and function, show a coincidence in the ideas and elements of society among the people among whom the two religions flourished; and this coincidence is perhaps sufficiently strong to prove that the religion of Odin must have sprung up originally in the East among the same ideas and social elements as Mahometanism. The rapid conquest by Christianity over Odinism, about the beginning of the 11th century, proves that the latter was not indigenous, but imported, and belonged to different physical circumstances and a different social state. The exclusion of females from a future life, and their virtues from reward, was not suited to the physical circumstances under which men live in the North, although among a people living on horseback in the plains of Asia the female may hold no higher social estimation than the horse. Christianity, by including the female sex in its benefits, could not but prevail in the North over Odinism.

The Odin worship was not the only form of paganism in the north of Europe. We find in chapter 143. of the "Saga of Saint Olaf," an account of an expedition of Karl and Gunstein round the North Cape to Biarmaland, or the coast of the White Sea; and after trading for skins at the mouth of the Dwina, where Archangel now stands, of their proceeding, when the fair was over, to plunder the temple and idol of Jomala. They took a cup of silver coins that rested on his knee, a gold ornament that was round his neck, and treasure that was buried with the chiefs interred there, and retired to their ships. If this Jomala had been Thor or Odin, these vikings would not have plundered his temple, especially as one of them, Thorer Hund, was a zealous Odin worshipper, and a martyr at last to his faith. We find, on the



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Baltic side of the country, that the Slavonic tribe who inhabit Esthonia had a Jomala, according to Kohl's "Reise in der Deutch-Russisch Ostsee Provinzen," 1842; and the name of Jomsburg given to the fortress of that singular association the Jomsburg Vikings on the island of Wollin, off the coast of Esthonia, seems to have had the same origin. The Joms-Vikings were a military association of pirates inhabiting the castle of Jomsburg, professing celibacy and obedience to their chief, and very similar to the orders of knights—as the Teutonic order, and that of Rhodes and the Templars—which appeared in Europe a century or two later; but these pirate-knights do not appear to have been in any way connected with the religion of Odin, or of Jomala. The Laplanders and Finlanders appear to have worshipped Jomala\* also; and he appears to have been altogether a Slavonic, not a Saxon god. From the account of the expedition to Biarmaland, the temple and idol of this worship must have been as rich, and the attendance of guards or priests on the temple much greater than in the Odin worship in Norway in that age, viz. the beginning of the 11th century.

\* Jomala is still the name of the Deity—of God—among the Laplanders and Finlanders, according to Geyer.—*Swenske Folket's Hist.* p. 96.

## CHAP. III.

## OF THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE NORTHMEN.

IF the historical sagas tell us little concerning the religion and religious establishments of the pagan Northmen, they give us incidentally a great deal of curious and valuable information about their social condition and institutions; and these are of great interest, because they are the nearest sources to which we can trace almost all that we call Anglo-Saxon in our own social condition, institutions, national character, and spirit. The following observations are picked up from the sagas. The reader of Snorro Sturleson's "Heimskringla" has before him the facts, or narratives, and can see himself whether the following inferences from them are warranted, and the views given of the singular state of society among the Northmen correctly drawn.

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The lowest class in the community were the Thraell (Thralls, slaves). They were the prisoners captured by the vikings at sea on piratical cruises, or carried off from the coasts of foreign countries in marauding expeditions. These captives were, if not ransomed by their friends, bought and sold at regular slave markets. The owners could kill them without any fine, mulct, or manbod to the king, as in the case of the murder or manslaughter of a free man. King Olaf Tryggveson, in his childhood, his mother Astrid, and his foster-father Thorolf, were captured by an Esthonian viking, as they were crossing the sea from Sweden on their way to Novogorod, and were divided among the crew, and sold. An Esthonian man called Klerkon got Olaf



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and Thorolf as his share of the booty; but Astrid was separated from her son Olaf then only three years of age. Klerkon thought Thorolf too old for a slave, and that no work would be got out of him to repay his food, and therefore killed him; but sold the boy to a man called Klærk for a goat. A peasant called Reas bought him from Klærk for a good cloak; and he remained in slavery until he was accidentally recognised by his uncle, who was in the service of the Russian king, and was by him taken to the court of Novogorod, where he grew up. His mother Astrid, apparently long afterwards, was recognised by a Norwegian merchant called Lodin at a slave market to which she had been brought for sale. Lodin offered to purchase her, and carry her home to Norway, if she would accept of him in marriage, which she joyfully agreed to; Lodin being a man of good birth, who sometimes went on expeditions as a merchant, and sometimes on viking cruises. On her return to Norway her friends approved of the match as suitable; and when her son, King Olaf Tryggvesson, came to the throne, Lodin and his sons by Astrid were in high favour. This account of the capturing, selling, and buying slaves, and killing one worn out, is related, as it would be at present in the streets of Washington, as an ordinary matter. Slavery among the Anglo-Saxons at this period, namely, in the last half of the 10th century, appears to have become rather an *adscriptio glebæ* — the man sold or transferred with the land — than a distinct saleable property in the person of the slave; at least we hear of no slave markets in England at which slaves were bought and sold. In Norway this class appears to have been better treated than on the south side of the Baltic, and to have had some rights. Lodin had to ask his slave Astrid to accept of him in marriage. We find them also in the first half of the 11th century, at least under some

masters, considered capable of acquiring and holding property of their own. When Asbiorn came from Halogaland in the north of Norway to purchase a cargo of meal and malt, of which articles King Olaf the Saint, fearing a scarcity, had prohibited the exportation from the south of Norway, he went to his relation Erling Skialgsson, a peasant or *bondi*, who was married to a sister of the late King Olaf Trygvesson, and was a man of great power. Erling told Asbiorn that in consequence of the law he could not supply him, but that his thralls or slaves could probably sell him as much as he required for loading his vessel; adding the remarkable observation, that they, the slaves, are not bound by the law and country regulation like other men, — evidently from the notion that they were not parties, like other men, to the making the law in the Thing. It is told of this Erling, who was one of the most considerable men in the country and brother-in-law of King Olaf Trygvesson, although of the bonder or peasant class, that he had always 90 free-born men in his house, and 200 or more when Earl Hakon, then regent of the country, came into the neighbourhood; that he had a ship of 32 banks of oars; and when he went on a viking cruise, or in a levy with the king, had 200 men at least with him. He had always on his farm thirty slaves, besides other workpeople; and he gave them a certain task as a day's work to do, and gave them leave to work for themselves in the twilight, or in the night. He also gave them land to sow, and gave them the benefit of their own crops; and he put upon them a certain value, so that they could redeem themselves from slavery, which some could do the first or second year, and "all who had any luck could do it in the third year." With this money Erling bought new slaves, and he settled those who had thus obtained their freedom on his newly cleared land, and



found employment for them in useful trades, or in the herring fishery, for which he furnished them with nets and salt. The same course of management is ascribed in the Saga of Saint Olaf to his stepfather, Sigurd Syr, who is celebrated for his prudence, and wisdom, and skill in husbandry; and it has probably been general among the slaveholders. The slaves who had thus obtained their freedom would belong to what appears to have been a distinct class from the peasants or bonders on the one hand, or the slaves on the other—the class of unfree men.

This class—the unfree—appears to have consisted of those who, not being udal-born to any land in the country, so as to be connected with, and have an interest in, the succession to any family estate, were not free of the Things; were not entitled to appear and deliberate in those assemblies; were not Thingsmen. This class of unfree is frequently mentioned in general levies for repelling invasion, when all men, free and unfree, are summoned to appear in arms; and the term unfree evidently refers to men who had personal freedom, and were not thralls, as the latter could only be collected to a levy by their masters. This class would include all the cottars on the land paying a rent in work upon the farm to the peasant, who was udal-born proprietor; and, under the name of housemen, this class of labourers in husbandry still exists on every farm in Norway. It would include also, the house-carls, or freeborn indoor men, of whom Erling, we see, always kept ninety about him. They were, in fact, his body-guard and garrison, the equivalent to the troop maintained by the feudal baron of Germany in his castle; and they followed the *bondi* or peasant in his summer excursions of piracy, or on the levy when called out by the king. They appear to have been free to serve whom they pleased. We find many of the class of bonders

who kept a suite of eighty or ninety men; as Erling, Harek of Thiotö, and others. Swein, of the little isle of Gairsay in Orkney, kept, we are told in the Orkneyinga Saga, eighty men all winter; and as we see the owner of this farm, which could not produce bread for one fourth of that number, trusting for many years to his success in piracy for subsisting his retainers, we must conclude that they formed a numerous class of the community. This class would also include workpeople, labourers, fishermen, tradesmen, and others about towns and farms, or rural townships, who, although personally free and free-born, not slaves, were unfree in respect of the rights possessed by the class of bonders, landowners, or peasants, in the Things. They had the protection and civil rights imparted by laws, but not the right to a voice in the enactment of the laws, or regulation of public affairs in the Things of the country. They were, in their rights, in the condition of the German population at the present day.

The class above the unfree in civil rights, the free peasant-proprietors, or bonder class, were the most important and influential in the community. We have no word in English, or in any other modern language, exactly equivalent to the word *bondi*, because the class itself never existed among us. Peasant does not express it; because we associate with the word peasant the idea of inferior social importance to the feudal nobility, gentry, and landed proprietors of a country, and this bonder class was itself the highest class in the country. Yeoman, or, in Cumberland, statesman, expresses their condition only relatively to the portions of land owned by them; not their social position as the highest class of landowners. If the Americans had a word to express the class of small landholders in their old settled states who live on their little properties, have the highest social in-



fluence in the country, and are its highest class, and, although without family aggrandisement by primogeniture succession, retain family distinction and descent, and even family pride, but divide their properties on the udal principle among their children, it would express more justly what the bonder class were than the words landholder, yeoman, statesman, peasant-proprietor, or peasant. In the following translation of the Heimskringla, where the word peasant is used for the word *bondi*\*, the reader will have to carry in mind that these peasants were, in fact, an hereditary aristocracy, comprehending the great mass of the population, holding their little estates by a far more independent tenure than the feudal nobility of other countries, and having their land strictly entailed on their own families and kin, and with much family pride, and much regard for and record of their family descent and alliances, because each little estate was entailed on each peasant's whole family and kin. Udal right was, and is to this day in Norway, a species of entail, in realty, in the family that is udal-born to it. The udal land could not be alienated by sale, gift to the church, esheat to a superior, forfeiture, or by any other casualty, from the kindred who were udal-born to it; and they had, however distantly connected, an eventual right of succession vested in them superior to any right a stranger in blood could acquire. The udal-born to a piece of land could evict any other possessor, and,

\* Bondi (in the plural bønder) does not suit the English ear, and there is no reasoning with the ear in matters of language. Bonder, although it be plural, is therefore used singularly; and bonders, although it be a double plural, to express more than one of the bondi. The word itself, bondi or buandir, seems derived from bu, a country dwelling; and signifying also the stock, wealth, affairs, and all that belongs to husbandry. The word bu is still retained in Orkney and Shetland, to express the principal farm and farm-house of a small township or property, the residence of the proprietor; and is used in Denmark and Norway to express stock, or farm stock and substance.

until a very late period, even without any repayment of what the new possessor having no udal right may have paid for it, or laid out upon it; and at the present day a right of redemption within a certain number of years, is competent to those udal-born to an estate which has been sold out of a family. The right to the crown of Norway itself was udal-born right in a certain family or race, traced from Odin down to Harald Haarfager through the Yngling dynasty, as a matter of religious faith; but from Harald Haarfager as a fixed legal and historical point. All who were of his blood were udal-born to the Norwegian crown, and with equal rights of succession in equal degrees of propinquity. The eldest son had no exclusive right, either by law or in public opinion, to the whole succession, and the kingdom was more than once divided equally among all the sons. This principle of equal succession appears to have been so rooted in the social arrangement and public mind, that notwithstanding all the evils it produced in the succession to the crown by internal warfare between brothers, it seems never to have been shaken as a principle of right; and the kings who had laboured the most to unite the whole country into one sovereignty, as Harald Haarfager, were the first to divide it again among their sons. One cause of this may have been the impossibility, among all classes, from the king to the peasant, of providing otherwise for the younger branches of a family than by giving them a portion of the land itself, or of the products of the land paid instead of money taxes to the crown. Legitimacy of birth was held of little account, owing probably to marriage not being among the Odin-worshippers a religious as well as a civil act; for we find all the children, illegitimate as well as legitimate, esteemed equal in udal-born right even to the throne itself; and although high descent on the mother's side also ap-



pears to have been esteemed, it was no obstacle even to the succession to the crown that the mother, as in the case of Magnus the Good, had been a slave. This was the consequence of polygamy, in which, as in the East, the kings indulged. Harald Haarfager had nine wives at once, and many concubines; and every king, even King Olaf the Saint, had concubines as well as wives; and we find polygamy indulged in down to about 1130, when Sigurd the Crusader's marriage with Cecilia, at the time his queen was alive and not divorced, was opposed by the Bishop of Bergen, who would not celebrate it; but nevertheless the priest of Stavanger performed the ceremony, on the king's duly paying the church for the indulgence. Polygamy appears not to have been confined to kings and great men; for we find in the old Icelandic law book, called the "Grey Goose," that, in determining the mutual rights of succession of persons born in either country, Norway or Iceland, in the other country, it is provided that children born in Norway in bigamy should have equal right as legitimate children, — which also proves that in Iceland civilisation was advanced so much farther than in Norway that bigamy was not lawful there, and its offspring not held legitimate. Each little estate was the kingdom in miniature, sometimes divided among children, and again reunited by succession of single successors by udal-born right vesting it in one. These landowners, with their entailed estates, old families, and extensive kin or clanship, might be called the nobility of the country, but that, from their great numbers and small properties, the tendency of the equal succession to land being to prevent the concentration of it into great estates, they were the peasantry. In social influence they had no class, like the aristocracy of feudal countries, above them. All the legislation, and the administration of law also, was in their hands. They alone conferred the crown at their Things. No man, however clear

and undisputed his right of succession, ventured to assume the kingly title, dignity, and power, but by the vote and concurrence of a Thing. He was proposed by a bonder; his right explained; and he was received by the Thing before he could levy subsistence, or men and aid, or exert any act of kingly power within the jurisdiction of the Thing. After being received and proclaimed at the Ore Thing held at Drontheim as the general or sole king of Norway, the upper king, — which that Thing alone had the right to do, — he had still to present himself to each of the other district Things, of which there were four, to entitle him to exercise royal authority, or enjoy the rights of royalty within their districts. The bonders of the district, who had voice and influence in those Things by family connection and personal merit, were the first men in the country. Their social importance is illustrated by the remarkable fact, that established kings — as, for instance, King Olaf Trygvesson — married their sisters and daughters to powerful bonders, while others of their sisters and daughters were married to the kings of Sweden and Denmark. Erling the bonder refused the title of Earl when he married Astrid, the king's sister. Lodin married the widow of a king, and the mother of King Olaf Trygvesson. There was no idea of disparagement, or inferiority, in such alliances; which shows how important and influential this class was in the community.

It is here, in these assemblies or Things of the Northmen, the immediate predecessors of the Norman conquerors, and their ancestors also, — by which, however rudely, legislation and all parliamentary principles were exercised, — that we must look for the origin of our parliaments, and the spirit and character of our people; on which, and not on the mere forms, our constitution is founded. The Wittenagemoth of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchic kings were not, like the



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Things of the Northmen, existing and influential assemblies of the people meeting *suo jure* at stated times, enacting and administering laws, and so interwoven with the whole social and political idiosyncrasy of the people, that the state could have no movement or existence but through such assemblies. The Wittenagemoth, as the name implies, appears to have been merely a council of the wise and important men of the country, selected by the king to meet, consult, and advise with him, — which is as different from a Thing as a cabinet council from a parliament. The Northmen who invaded and colonised the kingdom of Northumberland, had entirely expelled other occupants in the 9th century. The Anglo-Saxons had fled before the pagan and barbarous invaders who seized and settled on the lands, and, from the proximity to Norway and Denmark, received a rapid accession to their numbers by the influx of new settlers, as well as by their own increase of population. Normandy was only conquered by the Northmen, but Northumberland was colonised. Their religion, language, and laws were established. They had their own, and not the Anglo-Saxon laws: a proof that they were a population not Anglo-Saxon in their social institutions. This appears from the laws of Edward the Elder, of Alfred himself, and from the treaties of these kings with Guthrun, the leader or chief of the Northmen who then occupied Northumberland. The kingdom of Northumberland, comprehending the present counties of York, Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and parts of Lancashire; East Anglia also, comprehending the Isle of Ely, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk; and the country of the former East Saxons, comprehending Essex, Middlesex, and part of Hertfordshire, and also parts of the northern and southern extremities of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia,—were so entirely occupied by Danes, or people

of Danish descent, that they were under Danish, not Anglo-Saxon law. From the first invasions of the Danes in 787, or from the end of the 8th century to the time of the Norman conquest in 1066, or nearly 300 years, the laws and usages of the Northmen had prevailed over this large portion of the island. This kingdom of Northumberland would, at the present day, be more populous and wealthy than either of the kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark, Hanover, Holland, Belgium, Saxony, or Wirtemberg, and had no doubt a proportional importance in those times. The Northmen, immediately previous to the Norman conquest, had conquered the whole of England, and held it from 1003 to 1041, for four successive reigns; viz. of Swein, Canute the Great, Harald Harefoot, and Hardicanute. In the laws of Edward the Confessor, as given by Lambart in 1568, and republished by Wheloch at the end of his edition of Bede, 1644, it is stated that for sixty-eight years previous to the Norman conquest, these Anglo-Saxon laws, originally framed by Edgar, had been out of use; and when William the Conqueror, in the fourth year of his reign, renewed these laws of Edward the Confessor, he was more inclined to retain the laws of the Northmen then in general use. If we strike off Wales, Cornwall, the western borders towards Scotland, and all comprehended in the kingdom of Northumberland, East Anglia, and other parts peopled by Northmen and their descendants, it is difficult to believe that the old Anglo-Saxon branch could have been predominant in the island, in numbers, power, and social influence; or could have prevailed to such an extent over the character and spirit of the population as to bury all social movement under the apathy and superstition in which they appear to have been sunk. The rebellions against William the Conqueror and his successors appear to have been almost always raised, or mainly supported,



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in the counties of recent Danish descent, not in those peopled by the old Anglo-Saxon race. The spirit and character of men having rights in society were undoubtedly renewed, and kept alive in England, by this great infusion into the population of people who had these rights, and the spirit and character produced by them, in their native land. A new and more vigorous branch was planted in the country than the old Anglo-Saxon. In historical research it is surely more reasonable to go to the nearest source of the institutions, laws, and spirit of a people — to the recent and great infusion into England from the north, during the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, of men bred up in a rude but vigorous exercise of their rights in legislation, and in all the acts of their government — than to the most remote, and to trace in the obscure hints of Tacitus of popular and free institutions existing a thousand years before in the forests of Germany, the origin of our parliaments, constitution, and national character. The German people, the true unmixed descendants of the old Saxon race whom Tacitus describes, never, from the earliest date in modern history to the present day, had a single hour of religious, civil, and political liberty, as nations, or as individuals, — never enjoyed the rights which the American citizen or the British subject, however imperfectly, enjoy in the freedom of person, property, and mind, at the present day, in their social condition. If the great stock itself of the Anglo-Saxon race has not transmitted to its immediate posterity in its own land the institutions of a free people, nor the spirit, character, independence of mind, on which alone they can be founded with stability, it appears absurd to trace to that stock our free institutions, and the principles in our character and spirit by which they are maintained, when we find a source so much nearer from which they would naturally flow. Our civil, religious, and political rights, — the principles,

spirit, and forms of legislation through which they work in our social union, are the legitimate offspring of the Things of the Northmen, not of the Wittenagemoth of the Anglo-Saxons—of the independent Norse viking, not of the abject Saxon monk.

It would be a curious inquiry for the political philosopher to examine the causes which produced, in the 10th century, such a difference in the social condition of the Northmen, and of the cognate Anglo-Saxon branch in England and Germany. Physical causes connected with the nature of the country and climate, as well as the conventional causes of udal right, and the exclusion of inheritance by primogeniture, prevented the accumulation of land into large estates, and the rise of a feudal nobility like that of Germany. The following physical causes appear not only to have operated directly in preventing the growth of the feudal system in the country of the Northmen, but to have produced some of the conventional causes also which concurred to prevent it.

The Scandinavian peninsula consists of a vast table of mountain land, too elevated in general for cultivation, or even for the pasturage of large herds or flocks together in any one locality; and although sloping gently towards the Baltic or the Sound on the Swedish side, and there susceptible of the same inhabitation and husbandry as other countries, in as far as climate and soil will allow, on the other side,—the proper country of the Northmen,—throwing out towards the sea all round huge prongs of rocky and lofty ridges, either totally bare of soil, or covered with pine forests, growing apparently out of the very rock, and with no useful soil beneath them. The valleys and deep glens between these ridges, which shoot up into lofty pinnacles, precipices, and mountains, are filled at the lower end by the ocean, forming fiords, as these inlets of the sea are called, which run far up into the land, in some



cases a hundred miles or more; yet so narrow that the stones, it is said, rolling down from the mountain slope on one side of such a fiord, are often projected from the steep overhanging precipice, in which the slope half-way down ends, across to the opposite shore. These fiords in general, however, are fine expanses or inland lakes of the ocean,—calm, deep, pure blue; and shut in on every side by black precipices and green forests, and with fair wooded islets sleeping on the bosom of the water. These fiords are the peculiar and characteristic feature of Norwegian scenery. Rivers of great volume of water, but generally of short and rapid course, pour into the fiords from the Fielde, or high table-land behind, which forms the body or mass of the country. It is on the flat spots of arable land on the borders of these fiords, rivers, and the lakes into which the rivers expand, that the population lives. In some of these river-valleys and sea-valleys, a single farm of a few acres of land is only found here and there in many miles of country, the bare rock dipping at once into the blue deep water, and leaving no margin for cultivation. In others, narrow slips of inhabitable arable land extend some way, but are hemmed in behind, on the land side, by the rocky ridges which form the valley; and they are seldom broad enough to admit of two rows of little farms, or even of two large fields, in the breadth between the hill-foot and the water; and in the length are often interrupted by some bare prong of rock jutting from the side-ridge into the slip of arable level land, and dividing it from such another slip. All the land capable of cultivation, either with spade or plough, has been cultivated from the most remote times; and there is little room for improvement, because it is the ground-rock destitute of soil, not merely trees or loose rocks encumbering the soil, that opposes human industry. The little estates, not averaging

perhaps fifty acres each of arable land, are densely inhabited; because the seasons for preparing the ground, sowing, and reaping, are so brief, that all husbandry work must be performed in the shortest possible time, and consequently at the expense of supporting, all the year, a great many hands on the farm to perform it; and the fishing in the fiord, river, or lake, the summer pasturage for cattle in the distant *fielde-glens* attached to each little estate in the inhabited country, and a little wood-cutting in the forest, afford subsistence to many more people than the little farm itself would require for its cultivation in a better clime, or could support from its own produce. The extent of every little property has been settled for ages, and want of soil and space prevents any alteration in the extent, and keeps it within the unchangeable boundaries of rock and water. It is highly interesting to look at these original little family estates of the men who, in the 9th and 10th centuries, played so important a part in the finest countries of Europe,—who were the origin of the men and events we see at this day, and whose descendants are now seated on the thrones and in the palaces of Europe, and in the West are making a new world of social arrangements for themselves. The sites, and even the names, of the little estates or *gaards* on which these men were born, remain unchanged, in many instances, to this day; and the posterity of the original proprietors of the 9th century may reasonably be supposed, in a country in which the land is entailed by *udal* right upon the family, to be at this day the possessors—engaged, however, now in cutting wood for the French or Newcastle market, instead of in conquering Normandy and Northumberland.

Some of our great English nobility and gentry leave their own splendid seats, parks, and estates in England, to enjoy shooting and fishing in Norway for



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a few weeks. They are little aware that they are perhaps passing by the very estates which their own ancestors once ploughed, — sleeping on the same spot of this earth on which their forefathers, a thousand years ago, slept, and were at home; men, too, as proud then of their high birth, of their descent, through some seven-and-twenty generations, from Odin, or his followers the Godar, as their posterity are now of having “come in with or before the Conqueror.” The common traveller visiting this land destitute of architectural remains of former magnificence, without the temples and classical ruins of Italy, or the cathedrals and giant castles of Germany, will yet feel here that the memorials of former generations may be materially insignificant, yet morally grand. These little farms and houses, as they stand at this day, were the homes of men whose rude, but just and firm sense of their civil and political rights in society, is, in the present times, radiating from the spark of it they kindled in England, and working out in every country the emancipation of mankind from the thralldom of the institutions which grew up under the Roman empire, and still cover Italy and Germany, along with the decaying ruins of the splendour, taste, magnificence, power, and oppression of their rulers. Europe holds no memorials of ancient historical events which have been attended by such great results in our times, as some rude excavations in the shore-banks of the island of Vigr\*, in Möre, — which are pointed out by the finger of tradition as the dry docks in which the vessels of Rolf Ganger, from whom the fifth in descent was our William the Conqueror, were drawn up in winter, and from whence he launched them, and set out from Norway on the expedition in which he conquered Normandy. The philosopher might seat himself be-

\* Vigroe, the isle of Vigr, is situated in Haram parish, in the bailiwick of Soud Mör.—*Strohm's Biskryvelse over Möre*, and *Kraft's Norge*.

side the historian amidst the ruins of the Capitol, and with Rome, and all the monuments of Roman power and magnificence under his eye, might venture to ask whether they, magnificent and imposing as they are, suggest ideas of greater social interest,—are connected with grander moral results on the condition, well-being, and civilisation of the human race in every land, than these rude excavations in the isle of Vigr, which once held Rolf Ganger's vessels.

It is evident that such a country in such a climate never could have afforded a rent, either in money or in natural products, for the use of the land, to a class of feudal nobility possessing it in great estates, although it may afford a subsistence to a class of small working landowners, like the bonders, giving their own labour to the cultivation, and helping out their agricultural means of living with the earnings of their labour in other occupations—in piracy and pillage on the coasts of other countries in the 9th century, and in the 19th with the cod fishery, the herring fishery, the wood trade, and other peaceful occupations of industry. On account of these physical circumstances—of a soil and climate which afford no surplus produce from land, after subsisting the needful labourers, to go as rent to a landlord—no powerful body of feudal nobility could grow up in Norway, as in other countries in the middle ages; and from the same causes, now in modern times, during the 400 years previous to 1814 in which Denmark had held Norway, all the encouragement that could be given by the Danish government to raising a class of nobility in Norway was unavailing. Slavery even could not exist in any country in which the labour of the slave would barely produce the subsistence of the slave, and would leave no surplus gain from his labour for a master; still less could a nobility, or body of great landowners drawing rent, subsist where land can barely



produce subsistence for the labour which, in consequence of the shortness of the seasons, is required in very large quantity, in proportion to the area, for its cultivation. We find, accordingly, that when the viking trade, the occupation of piracy and pillage, was extinguished by the influence of Christianity, the progress of civilisation, the rise of the Hanseatic League and of its establishments, which in Norway itself both repressed piracy and gave beneficial occupation in the fisheries to the surplus population formerly occupied in piracy and warfare, that class of people fell back upon husbandry and ordinary occupations which had formerly been engaged all summer and autumn in marauding expeditions; and the class of slaves, the thralls, was necessarily superseded in their utility by people living at home all the year. The last piratical expeditions were about the end of the 12th century, and in the following century thralldom, or slavery, was, it is understood, abolished by law by Magnus the Law Improver. The labour of the slave was no longer needed at home, and would not pay the cost of his subsistence.

Physical circumstances also, and not conventional or accidental circumstances, evidently moulded the other social arrangements of the Northmen into a shape different from the feudal. The Things or assemblies of the people, which kings had to respect and refer to, may be deduced much more reasonably from natural causes similar to those which prevented the rise of a feudal class of nobles in Norway, than from political institutions or principles of social arrangement carried down from the ancient Germans in a natural state of liberty in remote ages. The same causes will produce the same effects in all ages. It is refining too much in political antiquarianism to refer all liberal social arrangements — our English parliaments, our constitutional checks upon the executive

power in the state, our popular representation, and the spirit of our laws—to the Wittenagemoths of the Saxons, and to trace these again up to principles of freedom in social arrangement derived from the Germanic tribes in the days of Tacitus. But it is not refining too much to conclude that, in every age and country, there are but two ways in which the governing class of a community can issue their laws, commands, or will, to the governed. One is through writing, and by the arts of writing and reading being so generally diffused that in every locality one individual at least, the civil functionary or the parish priest, is able to communicate the law, command, or will of the governing, to that small group of the governed over which he is placed. The other way, and the only way where, from the nature of the soil and climate, the governed are widely scattered, and writing and reading are rarely attained, and such civil or clerical arrangement not efficient, was to convene Things or general assemblies of the people, at which the law, command, or will of the governing could be made known to the governed. There could be no other way, in poor thinly-inhabited countries especially, by which the governing, however despotic, could get their law, command, or will done; for these must be made known to be executed or obeyed, whether they were for a levy of men or of money, for war or for peace, for rewarding and honouring, or for punishing and disgracing—the law, command, or will must be promulgated. Nor is it refining too much to conclude, that wheresoever men are assembled together in numbers for public business, be it merely to hear the law, command, or will of a despotic ruler, the spirit of deliberating upon, considering, and judging of the decree given out, and of the public interests involved in it, is there in the midst of them. The democratic element of society is there,—the spirit



of judging in their own affairs is there, and is let loose ; for such an assembly is in effect a parliament, in which public opinion will make itself heard ; and coming from the only military force of those ages, the mass of the people, and, in the North, of a people without military subordination to a feudal aristocracy in civil affairs, must predominate over the will of the king supported only by his court retinue. The concurrence of a few great nobles could not here give effect to the royal command, law, or will ; because the few, the intermediate link of a powerful aristocracy, which to this day chains the Anglo-Saxon race on the Continent, was from physical causes — the poverty of the soil — totally wanting among the Northmen, and the kings had to deal direct with the people in great general assemblies or Things. The necessity of holding such general meetings or Things for announcing to the people the levies of men, ships, and provisions required of them, and for all public business, and the check given by the Things to all measures not approved of by the public judgment, appear in every page of the *Heimskringla*, and constitute its great value, in fact, to us, as a record of the state of social arrangement among our ancestors. The necessity of assembling the people was so well established, that we find no public act whatsoever undertaken without the deliberation of a Thing ; and the principle was so engrafted in the spirit of the people, that even the attack of an enemy, the course to be taken in dangerous circumstances, to retreat or advance, were laid before a Thing of all the people in the fleet or army ; and they often referred it to the king's own judgment, that is, the king took authority from the Thing to act in the emergency on his own plan and judgment. A reference to the people in all that concerned them was interwoven with the daily life of the Northmen, in peace and in war. We read of House Things, of

Court Things, of District Things for administering law, of Things for consultation of all engaged in an expedition; and in all matters, and on all occasions, in which men were embarked with common interests, a reference to themselves, a universal spirit of self-government in society, was established. King Swerrer, who reigned from 1177 to 1203, after the period when Snorro Sturleson's work ends, although taking his own way in his military enterprises, appears in a saga of his reign never to have omitted calling a Thing, and bringing it round by his speeches, which are often very characteristic, to his own opinion and plans.

So essential were Things considered wheresoever men were acting with a common stake and interest, that in war expeditions the call to a Thing on the war-horn or trumpet appears to have been a settled signal-call known to all men,—like the call to arms, or the call to attack; and each kind of Thing, whether it was a general Thing that was summoned, or a House Thing of the king's counsellors, or a Herd Thing of the court, or of the leaders of the troops, appears to have had its distinct peculiar call on the war-horn known to all men. In the ordinary affairs of the country, the Things were assembled in a simple and effective way. A *bod*, called a *budstikke* in Norway, where it is still used, was a stick of wood like a constable's baton, with a spike at the end of it, which was passed from house to house, as a signal for the people to assemble. In each house it was well known to which neighbouring house it had to be passed, and the penalties for detaining the *bod* were very heavy. In modern times, the place, house, and occasion of meeting, are stated on a slip of paper inclosed in the bottom of the *budstick*; but in former times the Thing-place, and the time allowed for repairing there, were known, and whether to go armed or unarmed was the only matter requiring to be indi-



cated. An arrow split into four parts was the known token for appearing in arms. If the people of a house to which the token was carried were from home, and the door locked, the bearer had to stick it on the door by the spike inserted in one end for this purpose; if the door was open, but the people not at home, the bearer had "to stick it in the house-father's great chair at the fireside;" and this was to be held a legal delivery of the token, exonerating the last bearer from the penalties for detaining it. The peace token, a simple stick with a spike; the war token, an arrow split into quarters, and sent out in different directions; a token in shape of an axe, to denote the presence of the king at the Thing; and one in shape of the cross, to denote that church matters were to be considered,—are understood to have been used before writing and reading were diffused. On one occasion, we read of Earl Hakon issuing the usual token for the bonders to meet him at a Thing; and it was exchanged, in its course, for the war token, and the bonders appeared in arms, and overpowered the Earl and his attendants.

The Things appear not to have been representative, but primary assemblies, of all the bonders of the district udal-born to land. In Sweden there appears to have been one general Thing held at Upsal, at the time when the festivals or sacrifices to Thor, Odin, and Friggia were celebrated. From the proceedings of one of the Things held at Upsal in February or March, 1018, related in the Saga of Saint Olaf, we may have some idea of the power of those assemblies. King Olaf of Sweden, who had a great dislike to Olaf King of Norway, was forced by this Thing to conclude a peace with, and give his daughter in marriage to, King Olaf of Norway, in order to put an end to hostilities between the two countries; and they threatened, by their lagman, to depose him for misgovernment, if

he refused the treaty and alliance which King Olaf of Norway proposed by his ambassador Hialte the Scald. The lagman appears to have been the depository and expounder of the laws passed by the Things, and to have been either appointed by the people as their president at the Things, or to have held his office by hereditary succession from the godar, and to have been priest and judge, exercising both the religious and judicial function. At this general Thing at Upsal the lagman of the district of Upland was entitled to preside; and his influence and power in this national assembly appear to have been much greater than the king's. It is a picturesque circumstance, mentioned in the Saga of Saint Olaf about this Thing at Upsal in 1018, that when Thrognyr the lagman rose after the ambassador from Norway had delivered his errand, and the Swedish king had replied to it, all the bonders, who had been sitting on the grass before, rose up, and crowded together to hear what their lagman Thrognyr was going to say; and the old lagman, whose white and silky beard is stated to have been so long that it reached his knees when he was seated, allowed the clanking of their arms and the din of their feet to subside before he began his speech. The Things appear to have been always held in the open air, and the people were seated; and the speakers, even the kings, rose up to address them. In the characters of great men given in the sagas we always find eloquence, ready agreeable speaking, a good voice, a quick apprehension, a ready delivery, and winning manners, reckoned the highest qualities of a popular king or eminent chief. His talent as a public speaker is never omitted. In Sweden this one general Thing appears to have been for the whole country; and besides the religious or civil business, a kind of fair for exchanging commodities arose from the concourse of people to it from all parts of the country.



In Norway, — owing no doubt to the much greater difference in the means of subsistence in the different quarters of the country, in some of which fishing-grounds out at sea, and even rocks abounding in sea-fowl eggs at the season, were subjects of property; in others pasturages in distant mountain glens, and in others arable lands only, are of importance,—four distinct Things appear in the oldest times to have been necessary for framing laws suitable to the different circumstances of their respective jurisdictions; and, within their jurisdictions, the smaller district Things appear to have determined law cases between parties according to the laws settled at the great Things; and as the mulcts or money penalties paid for all crimes went partly to the king, and were an important branch of the royal revenue, the kings, on their progresses through the land, with the lagman of each district, appear to have held these Things for administering justice and collecting their revenue. The king's bailiff, or the tacksman or donatory of the revenue of the district, appears to have held these Law Things in the king's absence. The great Things appear to have been legislative, and the small district Things within their circle of jurisdiction administrative. Of the great Things there were in old times four in different quarters of Norway. The Froste Thing was held in the Drontheim country, at a farm called Lagten, in the present bailiwick of Frosten; Gule Thing, at Evindwick, in the shi-prath of Gule, on the west coast of Norway; Eidsivia Thing, at Eidsvold, in Upper Raumerige, for the inland or upland districts of Norway; and Borgar Thing, at the old burgh called Sarpsborg, on the river Glommen, near the great waterfall called Sarpsfors. One or two other Law Things appear to have been added in later times: one in Halogaland for the people living far north, and one on the coast between the jurisdiction or circle of the

Sarpsborg Thing and that of the Gule Thing. A special Thing, called the Ore Thing, from being held on the Ore, Aar, or isthmus\* of the river Nid, on which the city of Drontheim stands, was considered the only Thing which could confer the sovereignty of the whole of Norway, the other Things having no right to powers beyond their own circles. It was only convened for this special purpose of examining and proclaiming the right to the whole kingdom; and it appears to have been only the kingship *de jure* that the Ore Thing considered and confirmed: the king had still to repair to each Law Thing and small Thing, to obtain their acknowledgment of his right, and the power of a sovereign within their jurisdictions. The scatt or land-tax,—the right of guest-quarters or subsistence on royal progresses,—the levy of men, ships, provisions, arms, for defence at home, or war expeditions abroad, had to be adjudged to the kings by the Things; and amidst the perpetual contests between udal-born claimants, the principle of referring to the Things for the right and power of a sovereign, and for the title of king, was never set aside. No class but the bonders appeared at Things with any power. The kings themselves appear to have been but Thingmen at a Thing.

Two circumstances, which may be called accidental, concurred with the physical circumstances of the country, soil, and clime, to prevent the rise of a feudal nobility in Norway at the period, the 9th century, when feudality was establishing itself over the rest of Europe. One was the colonisation of Iceland by that class which in other countries became feudal lords; the other was the conquests in England and in France, by leaders who drew off all of the same

\* The narrow slip of land between two waters, as at a river mouth or outlet of a lake, between it and the sea, is still called an Are or Ayre in the north of Scotland, and is the same as the Icelandic Ore.



class of more warlike habits than the settlers in Iceland, and opened a more promising field for their ambition abroad in those expeditions, than in struggling at home against the supremacy of Harald Haarfager. In his successful attempt to reduce all the small kings, or district kings, under his authority, he was necessarily thrown upon the people for support, and their influence would be naturally increased by the suppression through their aid of the small independent kings. This struggle was renewed at intervals until the introduction of Christianity by King Olaf the Saint; and the two parties appear to have supported the two different religions: the small kings and their party adhering to the old religion of Odin, under which the small kings, as godars, united the offices of judge and priest, and levied certain dues, and presided at the sacrificial meetings as judges as well as priests; and the other party, which included the mass of the people, supported Christianity, and the supremacy of King Olaf, because it relieved them from the exactions of the local kings, and from internal war and pillage. The influence of the people, and of their Things, gained by the removal to other countries of that class which at home would have grown probably into a feudal aristocracy. In Iceland an aristocratic republic was at first established, and in Normandy and Northumberland all that was aristocratic in Norway found an outlet for its activity.

A physical circumstance also almost peculiar to Norway, and apparently very little connected with the social state of a people, was of great influence, in concurrence with those two accidental circumstances, in preventing the rise of an aristocracy. The stone of the Peninsula in general, and of Norway in particular, is gneiss, or other hard primary rock, which is worked with difficulty, and breaks up in rough shapeless lumps, or in thin schistose plates; and walls

cannot be constructed of such building materials without great labour, time, and command of cement. Limestone is not found in abundance in Norway, and is rare in situations in which it can be made and easily transported; and even clay, which is used as a bedding or cement in some countries for rough lumps of stone in thick walls, is scarce in Norway. Wood has of necessity, in all times and with all classes, been the only building material. This circumstance has been of great influence in the middle ages on the social condition of the Northmen. Castles of nobles or kings, commanding the country round, and secure from sudden assault by the strength of the building, could not be constructed, and never existed in Norway. The huge fragments and ruins of baronial castles and strongholds, so characteristic of the state of society in the middle ages in the feudal countries of Europe, and so ornamental in the landscape now, are wanting in Norway. The noble had nothing to fall back upon but his war-ship, the king nothing but the support of the people. In the reign of our King Stephen, when England was covered with the fortified castles of the nobility, to the number, it is somewhere stated, of 1500, and was laid waste by their exactions and private wars, the sons of Harald Gille—the kings Sigurd, Inge, and Eystein—were referring their claims and disputes to the decision of Things of the people. In Normandy and England the Northmen and their descendants felt the want in their mother-country of secure fortresses for their power; and the first and natural object of the alien landholders was to build castles, and lodge themselves in safety by stone walls against sudden assaults, and above all against the firebrand of the midnight assailant. In the mother-country, to be surprised and burned by night within the wooden structures in which even kings had to reside, was a fate so common, that some of the kings



appeared to have lived on board ships principally, or on islands on the coast.

This physical circumstance of wanting the building material of which the feudal castles of other countries were constructed, and by which structures the feudal system itself was mainly supported, had its social as well as political influences on the people. The different classes were not separated from each other, in society, by the important distinction of a difference in the magnitude or splendour of their dwellings. The peasant at the corner of the forest could, with his time, material, and labour of his family at command, lodge himself as magnificently as the king,—and did so. The mansions of kings and great chiefs were no better than the ordinary dwellings of the bonders. Lade, near Drontheim,—the seat of kings before the city of Drontheim, or Nidaros, was founded by King Olaf Tryggvesson, and which was the mansion of Earl Hakon the Great, and of many distinguished men who were earls of Lade,—was, and is, a wooden structure of the ordinary dimensions of the houses of the opulent bonders in the district. Egge—the seat of Kalf Arneson, who led the bonder army against King Olaf which defeated and slew him at the battle of Stikkleslad, and who was a man of great note and social importance in his day—is, and always has been, such a farm-house of logs as may be seen on every ordinary farm estate of the same size. The foundation of a few loose stones, on which the lower tier of logs is laid to raise it from the earth, remains always the same, although all the superstructure of wood may have been often renewed; but these show the extent on the ground of the old houses. The equality of all ranks in those circumstances of lodging, food, clothing, fuel, furniture, which form great social distinctions among people of other countries, must have nourished a feeling of independence of external cir-

cumstances,—a feeling, also, of their own worth, rights, and importance, among the bonders,—and must have raised their habits, character, and ideas to a nearer level to those of the highest. The kings, having no royal residences, were lodged, with their court attendants on the royal progresses, habitually by the bonders, and entertained by them. At the present day there are no royal mansions, or residences of the great, in Norway, different from the ordinary houses of the bonders or peasant-proprietors. His Majesty Carl Johan has to lodge in their houses in travelling through his Norwegian dominions; and no king in Europe could travel through his kingdom, and be lodged so well every night by the same class. In ancient times the kings lived in guest-quarters,—that is, by billet upon the peasant-proprietors in different districts in regular turn; and even this kind of intercourse must have kept alive a high feeling of their own importance in the bonder class, in the times when, from the want of the machinery of a lettered functionary class, civil or clerical, all public business had to be transacted directly with them in their Things. The rise and diffusion of letters, learning, and a learned class, in the middle ages, retarded perhaps rather than advanced just principles of government and legislation. The people were more enslaved by the power which the learning of the middle ages threw into the hands of their rulers, than they were before in the ages of ignorance of letters, when their rude force was in direct contact, face to face, with the rude power of their rulers. This prejudicial effect of the revival of letters on civil, political, and religious liberty, by doing away with all direct *vivâ voce* communication in assemblies of the people between the rulers and the ruled, may be traced even to the present day in Germany and other countries. The people have no influence in their own concerns, because a



lettered body of functionaries, spread over the whole social body, and fixed in every locality, receives, and disseminates to the small groups of the population under their jurisdiction, the law, command, or will of the autocratic government, without that reference to the people which could not be avoided when all had to be convened in a Thing or assembly to hear the promulgation. The period in which the influence of the governed should have been made effective slipped by on the Continent, among the Anglo-Saxon race, without being used; and probably would have slipped by in England also, but for the recent admixture of a wilder, more ignorant, and more free people, in a great proportion of the island, who could not even be oppressed without collecting them into Things, or Folkmoths, to make known to them what they had to submit to. The very ignorance of the half pagan people of mixed or pure Danish descent who occupied so large a portion of the island at the Norman conquest, was the providential means of keeping alive that spirit of self-government in public affairs among the people, on which, and not on the mere forms of representative government, our social economy rests. The forms are useless without the life in the spirit of the people to animate them. France, and some countries of Germany, have got the moulds; but the stuff to fill them with is wanting in the people. We inherit this stuff in the national character from the great intermixture of the rude energetic Northmen, bred up in Things and consultations with their leaders, which took place during the Danish conquest immediately previous to the invasion of William the Conqueror; and in the generation immediately after his conquest this stuff began to show itself in fermentation, and worked out our present social institutions, and the spirit of our national character.

The lendermen, or tacksmen of the king's farms

and revenues, could scarcely be called a class. They were temporary functionaries, not hereditary nobles ; and had no feudal rights or jurisdiction, but had to plead in the Things like other bonders. As individuals they appear to have obtained power and influence, but not as a class ; and they never transmitted it to their posterity.

The earls, or jarls, were still less than the lendermen a body of nobility approaching to the feudal barons of other lands. The title appears to have been altogether personal ; not connected with property in land, or any feudal rights or jurisdiction. The Earls of Orkney—of the family of Rognvald Earl of Möre, the friend of Harald Haarfager, and father of Rolf Ganger—appear to have been the only family of hereditary nobles under the Norwegian crown exercising a kind of feudal power. The Earls of Möre appear to have been only functionaries or lendermen collecting the king's taxes, and managing the royal lands in the district, and retaining a part for their remuneration. The Earls of Orkney, however, of the first line, appear to have grown independent, and to have paid only military service, and a nominal quitrent, and only when forced to do so. This line appears to have been broken in upon in 1129, when Kala, the son of Koll, was made earl, under the name of Earl Rognvald. His father Koll was married to the sister of Earl Magnus the Saint ; but the direct male descendants of the old line, the sons of Earl Magnus's brothers, appear not to have been extinct. In Norway, from the time of Earl Hakon of Lade, who was regent or viceroy for the Danish kings when they expelled the Norwegian descendants of Haarfager, there appears to have been a jealousy of conferring the title of earl, as it probably implied some of Earl Hakon's power in the opinion of the people. Harald Haarfager had appointed sixteen earls, one



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for each district, when he suppressed the small kings; but they appear to have been merely collectors of his rents.

The churchmen were not a numerous or powerful class until after the first half of the 12th century. They were at first strangers, and many of them English. Nicolas Breakspear, the son, Matthew Paris tell us, of a peasant employed about the Benedictine monastery of Saint Albans in Hertfordshire, and educated by the monks there, was the first priest who obtained any political or social influence in Norway. He was sent there, when cardinal, on a mission to settle the church; and afterwards, when elected pope, 1154, under the title of Hadrian IV., he was friendly to the Norwegian people. His influence when in Norway was beneficially exerted in preventing the carrying of arms, or engaging in private feuds, during certain periods of truce proclaimed by the church. The body of priests in the peninsula until the end of the 12th century being small, and mostly foreigners from England, both in Sweden and in Norway, shows the want of education in Latin and in the use of letters among the pagan Northmen; and shows also the identity or similarity of the language of a great portion at least of England with that of the Scandinavian peninsula.

Several of the smaller institutions in society, which were transplanted into England by the Northmen or their successors, may perhaps be traced to the mode of living which the physical circumstances of the mother-country had produced. The kings having, in fact, no safe resting place but on board of ship, being in perpetual danger, during their progresses for subsistence on shore, to be surprised and burnt in their quarters by any trifling force, had no reluctance at all to such expeditions against England, the Hebrides, or the Orkney Islands, as they frequently undertook; and

when on shore, and from necessity subsisting in guest-quarters in inland districts, we see the first rudiments of the institution of a standing army, or body guard, or body of hired men-at-arms. The kings, from the earliest times, appear to have kept a herd, as it was called, or court. The herdmen were paid men-at-arms; and it appears incidentally from several passages in the sagas that they regularly mounted guard, — posted sentries round the king's quarters, — and had patrols on horseback, night and day, at some distance, to bring notice of any hostile advance. We find that Olaf Kyrre, or the Quiet, kept a body of 120 herdmen, 60 giesters, and 60 house-carls, for doing such work as might be required. The standing armed force, or body guard, appears to have consisted of two classes of people. The herdmen were apparently of the class udal-born to land, and consequently entitled to sit in Things at home; for they are called Thingmen, which appears to have been a title of distinction. The giester appears to have been a soldier of the unfree class; that is, not of those udal-born to land, and free of, or qualified to sit in, the Things. They appear to have been the common seamen, soldiers, and followers; for we do not find any mention of slaves ever employed under arms in any way, or in any war expeditions. The giesters appear to have been inferior to the thingmen or herdmen, as we find them employed in inferior offices, such as executing criminals or prisoners. The victories of Swein, and Canute the Great, are ascribed to the superiority of the hired bands of thingmen in their pay. The massacre of the Danes in 1002, by Ethelred, appears to have been of the regular bands of thingmen who were quartered in the towns, and who were attacked while unarmed and attending a church festival. The herdmen appear not only to have been disciplined and paid troops, but to have been clothed uniformly. Red was always



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the national colour of the Northmen, and continues still in Denmark and England the distinctive colour of their military dress. It was so of the herdmen and people of distinction in Norway, as appears from several parts of the sagas, in the 11th century. Olaf Kyrre, or the Quiet, appears to have introduced, in this century, some court ceremonies or observances not used before. For each guest at the royal table he appointed a torch-bearer, to hold a candle. The butler stood in front of the king's table to fill the cups, which, we are told, before his time were of deer's horn. The court-marshal had a table, opposite to the king's, for entertaining guests of inferior dignity. The drinking was either by measure, or without measure; that is, in each horn or cup there was a perpendicular row of studs at equal distances, and each guest when the cup or horn was passed to him drank down to the stud or mark below. At night, and on particular occasions, the drinking was without measure, each taking what he pleased; and to be drunk at night appears to have been common even for the kings. Such cups with studs are still preserved in museums, and in families of the bonders. The kings appear to have wanted no external ceremonial belonging to their dignity. They were addressed in forms, still preserved in the northern languages, of peculiar respect; their personal attendants were of the highest people, and were considered as holding places of great honour. Earl Magnus the Saint was, in his youth, one of those who carried in the dishes to the royal table; and torch-bearers, herdmen, and all who belonged to the court, were in great consideration; and it appears to have been held of importance, and of great advantage, to be enrolled among the king's herdmen.

We may assume from the above observations, derived from the facts and circumstances stated in various parts of the *Heimskringla*, that the intellectual

and political condition of this branch of the Saxon race, while it was pagan, was not very inferior to, although very different from, that of the Anglo-Saxon branch which had been Christianised five hundred years before, and had among them the learning and organisation of the church of Rome. They had a literature of their own; a language common to all, and in which that literature was composed; laws, institutions, political arrangements, in which public opinion was powerful; and had the elements of freedom and constitutional government. What may have been the comparative diffusion of the useful arts in the two branches in those ages? The test of the civilisation of a people, next to their intellectual and civil condition, is the state of the useful arts among them.



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## STATE OF THE USEFUL ARTS AMONG THE NORTHMEN.

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THE architectural remains of public buildings in a country—of churches, monasteries, castles,—as they are the most visible and lasting monuments, are often taken as the only measure of the useful arts in former times. Yet a class of builders, or stone-masons, wandering from country to country, like our civil engineers and rail-road contractors at the present day, may have constructed these edifices; and a people or a nobility sunk in ignorance, superstition, and sloth, may have paid for the construction, without any diffusion of the useful arts, or of combined industry, in the inert mass of population around. Gothic architecture in both its branches, Saxon and Norman, has evidently sprung from a seafaring people. The nave of the Gothic cathedral, with its round or pointed arches, is the inside of a vessel with its timbers, and merely raised upon posts, and reversed. No working model for a Gothic fabric could be given that would not be a ship turned upside down, and raised on pillars. The name of the main body of the Gothic church—the nave, *navis*, or *ship* of the building, as it is called in all the northern languages of Gothic root—shows that the wooden structure of the ship-builder has given the idea and principles to the architect, who has only translated the wood work into stone, and reversed it, and raised it to be the roof instead of the bottom of a fabric. The Northmen, however, can lay no claim to any attainment in architecture. The material and skill have been equally

wanting among them. From the pagan times nothing in stone and lime exists of any importance or merit as a building ; and the principal structure of an early age connected with Christianity, the cathedral of Drontheim, erected in the last half of the 12th century, cannot certainly be considered equal to the great ecclesiastical structures of Durham, York, or other English cathedrals, scarcely even to that of the same period erected in Orkney — the cathedral of Saint Magnus. We have, however, a less equivocal test of the progress and diffusion of the useful arts among the Northmen than the church-building of their Saxon contemporaries, for which they wanted the material. When we read of bands of ferocious, ignorant, pagan barbarians, landing on the coasts of England or France, let us apply a little consideration to the accounts of them, and endeavour to recollect how many of the useful arts must be in operation, and in a very advanced state too, and very generally diffused in a country, in order to fit out even a single vessel to cross the high seas, much more numerous squadrons filled with bands of fighting men. Legs, arms, and courage, the soldier and his sword, can do nothing here. We can understand multitudes of ignorant, ferocious barbarians, pressing in by land upon the Roman empire, overwhelming countries like a cloud of locusts, subsisting, as they march along, upon the grain and cattle of the inhabitants they exterminate, and settling, with their wives and children, in new homes ; but the moment we come to the sea we come to a check. Ferocity, ignorance, and courage, will not bring men across the ocean. Food, water, fuel, clothes, arms, as well as men, have to be provided, collected, transported ; and be the ships ever so rude, wood-work, iron-work, rope-work, cloth-work, cooper-work, in short almost all the useful arts, must be in full operation among a people, before even a hundred



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men could be transported, in any way, from the shores of Norway or Denmark to the coasts of England or France. Fixed social arrangements too, combinations of industry working for a common purpose, laws and security of person and property, military organisation and discipline, must have been established and understood, in a way and to an extent not at all necessary to be presupposed in the case of a tumultuous crowd migrating by land to new settlements. Do the architectural remains, or the history of the Anglo-Saxon people, or of any other, in the 8th or 9th century, and down to the 13th, give us any reasonable ground for supposing among them so wide a diffusion of the arts of working in wood and iron, of raising or procuring by commerce flax or hemp, of the arts of making ropes, spinning, and weaving sail-cloth, preserving provisions, coopering water casks, and all the other combinations of the primary arts of civilised life, implied in the building and fitting out vessels to carry three or four hundred men across the ocean, and to be their resting place, refuge, and home for many weeks, months, and on some of their viking cruises even for years? There is more of civilisation, and of a diffusion of the useful arts on which civilisation rests, implied in the social state of a people who could do this, than can be justly inferred from a people quarrying stones, and bringing them to the hands of a master-builder to be put together in the shape of a church or castle. Historians tell us that when Charlemagne, in the 9th century, saw some piratical vessels of the Northmen cruising at a distance in the Mediterranean, to which they had for the first time found their way, that he turned away from the window, and burst into tears. Was it the barbarism of these pirates, or their civilisation, their comparative superiority in the art of navigation, and of all belonging to it, that moved him? None of the

countries under his sway, none of the Christian populations of Europe in the 7th, 8th, or 9th centuries, had ships and men capable of such a voyage. The comparative state of ship-building and navigation, in two countries with sea coasts, is a better test of their comparative civilisation and advance in all the useful arts than that of their church-building. Compared to Italy, Sicily, or Bavaria, Great Britain or Scandinavia, or the United States of America, would be utterly barbarous and uncivilised, if structures of stone were a measure of the civilisation and general diffusion of the useful arts among a people. It is to be observed, also, that the ships of the Northmen in those ages did not belong to the king, or to the state, but to private adventurers and peasants, and were fitted out by them; and were gathered by a levy or impressment, from all the country, when required for the king's service. The arts connected with the building and fitting out such ships must have been generally diffused. The fleets were not, like those of King Alfred, created by, and belonging to, the king. We need not have any great notion of the kind and size of the vessels gathered by a levy from the peasantry; but the worst and least of them must have been sea-worthy, and of a size to navigate along the coast from the most northerly district, such as Halogaland, to the Baltic,—a distance of twelve degrees of latitude; they must have been of a size to carry and shelter men, with their provisions, clothes, and arms; and the arms of those days required great room for stowage. Stones were an ammunition which it was necessary to carry in every ship; because on the rocky steep coasts of Norway, or on the muddy shores of the Baltic, pebbly beaches at which this kind of ammunition could be replaced are not common. Swords, spears, battle-axes, arrow-heads, bows, and bow-strings had all to be kept dry, and out of the sea-spray; for



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rust and damp would make them useless as weapons. These, consequently, had to be stowed under a deck, or in chests. The shields alone could bear exposure to wet, and they appear to have been hung outside from the rails all round the vessel; so that they would occupy the place of quarter-cloths, or wash-boards, above the gunwale of our shipping. The stowage of their plunder also, which consisted of bulky articles, as malt, meal, grain, cattle, wool, clothes, arms taken in the forays on the coast, (and they had transport vessels as well as war vessels with them on their marauding expeditions,) required vessels of a considerable size. We need not suppose that, of the 1200 vessels which King Olaf in his last levy to oppose Canute the Great had assembled and brought to the Baltic, the greater number were more than large boats, of perhaps thirty feet of keel, with a forecastle deck, a cabin aft, and the centre open, and merely tilted over at night to shelter the crew. Yet to construct many hundreds of such rude craft as this, — and any kind of boat or ship below this, as a class of vessels, could not have withstood sea and weather along the coast of Norway, and across the Skagerack to the Sound, — implies a general diffusion of the art of working in iron; a trade in the arts of raising and smelting the ore; and a knowledge, in every district of the country, of the smith-work and carpenter-work, and tools and handicrafts necessary for ship-building and fitting out ships for sea. We have some data in the sagas from which we can arrive at the dimensions and appearance of the larger class of vessels used by the Northmen, allowing that the ordinary vessels of the peasants gathered by a levy could be no larger or better than large herring boats. We have in the Saga of Olaf Tryggvesson some details of the building of the Long Serpent and the Crane, sometime between the years 995 and 1000. The Long

Serpent is called the largest vessel that had ever been built in Norway to that time. These were long-ships, which appear to have been a denomination of ships of war, distinguishing them from last-ships, or ships for carrying cargoes. The long-ship was of much smaller breadth in proportion to the length. The long-ships appear to have been divided into two classes: dragon ships, from the figure head probably of a dragon being used on them, and which appear to have had from twenty to thirty rowers on each side; and snekiars, or cutters, with from ten to twenty rowers on a side. The Crane had thirty banks for rowers; and the forecastle and poop were high, and the vessel very narrow in proportion to her length. The Long Serpent had thirty-four banks for rowers, and the saga gives some interesting details concerning her. The length of her keel, we are told, that rested upon the grass, was 74 ells. This ell is stated by Macpherson, in his "Annals of Commerce," on the authority of Thorkelin, a learned antiquary, who was keeper of the Royal Library at Copenhagen, to have been equal to a foot and a half English measure. We have, therefore, 111 feet at the least, as the length of keel of this vessel. This would be within about 10 feet of the length of keel of one of our frigates of 42 guns, and of 942 tons burden, and of a breadth of 38 feet and a depth of 13 feet; or, taking a steam vessel of 111 feet of keel, the extreme breadth would be 22 feet, the depth  $13\frac{1}{2}$  feet, the tonnage 296 tons, and the horse-power 120. These are dimensions and proportions given for 111 feet of keel in the able articles on ship building and on steam navigation in the "Encyclopædia Britannica." The Long Serpent, being a rowing as well as sailing vessel, would have as much rake of stem and stern as a steamer; and would be as long on deck. She is described as of good breadth, but the breadth is not stated; well timbered, for which



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the saga refers to the knees for supporting the beams, which were then to be seen; and with thirty-four benches or banks for rowers, which would be the beams in a modern vessel. One of our long large steam vessels, with high poop deck and forecastle deck, low waist, and small breadth, would probably have very nearly the same appearance in the water as such a vessel as the Long Serpent; only, instead of paddle-boxes and wheels on each side, there would be thirty-four oars out on each side between the fore-castle and the poop. The Northmen appear by the saga to have been lavish in gilding and painting their vessels. One of these long low war-ships of the vikings, with a gilded head representing a dragon on the stem, and a gilded representation of its tail at the stern curling over the head of the steersman, with a row of shining red and white shields hung over the rails all round from stem to stern, representing its scaly sides, and thirty oars on each side giving it motion and representing its legs, must have been no inapt representation of the ideal figure of a dragon creeping over the blue calm surface of a narrow gloomy fiord, sunk deep, like some abode for unearthly creatures, between precipices of bare black rock, which shut out the full light of day. Dragon was a name for a class or size of war-ships, but each had its own name. The Crane, the Little Serpent, the Long Serpent, the Bison, and other vessels of about thirty banks for rowers, are mentioned; and vessels of from twenty to twenty-five banks appear to have been common among the considerable bonders, and cutters of ten or fifteen banks to have been the ordinary class of vessels of all who went on sea. A vessel of thirty or thirty-four banks for rowers would have that number of oars out on each side, and not fifteen or seventeen only on each side; because the breadth of such a vessel would be sufficient to give two rowers, sitting midships, a suffi-

cient length of lever between their hands and the fulcrum at the gunwales on either side, to wield and work any length of oar that could be advantageous: but in the smaller class of vessels of ten or fifteen oars it is likely that one oar only was worked on each bank, as in our men-of-war's boats, the whole breadth of the vessel being required for the portion of the lever or oar within the fulcrum or gunwale. Under the feet of the rowers, in the waist of the vessel, the chests of arms, stones for casting, provisions, clothing, and goods, have been stowed, and protected by a deck of moveable hatches. Upon this lower deck the crew appear to have slept at night, sheltered from the weather by a tilt or awning, when not landed and under tents on the beach for the night. Ship-tents are mentioned in the outfit of vessels as being of prime necessity, as much as ship-sails. In the voyages in the sagas, we read of fleets collected in the north of Norway, from Drontheim, and even from Halogaland, sailing south along the coast every summer as far as the Sound, and thence into the Baltic, or along the coast of Jutland and Sleswig, and thence over to Britain, or to the other coasts. The major part of the vessels appear to have taken a harbour every night, or to have been laid, on the coast of Norway, close to the rocks, in some sheltered spot, with cables on the land, or with the fore-foot of the vessel touching the beach; and the people either landed and set up tents on shore, or made a tilt on board by striking the mast, and laying the tilt cloths or sails over it. The large open vessels which at present carry the dried fish from the Lofoden isles to Bergen, although open for the sake of stowage, are of a size to carry masts of 40 feet long which are struck by the crew when not under sail, there being no standing rigging, and only one large square-sail. This appears to have been the rig and description of all the ancient vessels, great



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or small, of the Northmen. They appear to have had a certain show and luxury about their sails; for we read of them having stripes of white, red, and blue cloths; and we read of Sigurd the Crusader waiting for a fortnight at the mouth of the Dardanelles with a fair wind for going up the strait, until he got a wind with which he could sail up with the sails trimmed fore and aft in his ships, that the inhabitants on shore might see the splendour of his sails. These large rowing vessels had one advantage belonging only to steam vessels in our times, that they could back out of seen dangers; and being under command of oars, and with small draught of water, shallows, rocks, and lee shores were not such formidable dangers to them as to our sailing vessels. Many important towns in those times, as for instance all our Cinque Ports, appear to have been situated rather with a reference originally to a good convenience for beaching such vessels, than to good sheltered harbours for riding at anchor in. The whole coast of the peninsula, from the North Cape round to Tornea, is protected from the main ocean by an almost continuous belt of islands, islets, rocks, and half-tide reefs, or skerries, within which the navigation is comparatively smooth, although very intricate for vessels with sails only. This inland passage "within the skerries" is used now, even in winter, by small boats going to the cod-fishing in the Lofoden isles from the Bergen district. It is only at particular openings, as at the mouths of the great fiords, that this continuous chain of sheltering isles and rocks is broken, and that the eye of the ocean, as the Norwegian fishermen express it, looks in upon the land. By waiting opportunities to cross these openings vessels of a small class, we may suppose, have accompanied King Olaf in his foray to the Danish islands, in hopes of booty more profitable than fish; and we need not believe his

fleet of 1200 vessels raised by his levy to have been all of a large class. When his son Magnus the Good went to Denmark to claim the crown, upon the death of Hardicanute of England, in consequence of an agreement that the survivor of the two should succeed to the heritage of the other, he is stated to have had seventy large vessels with him, by which we may suppose vessels of twenty banks or upwards, such as the considerable bonders possessed, to be meant; and this number probably expresses more correctly the number of large ships then in the country. The size of the war-vessels appears to have been reckoned by the banks, or by the rooms between two banks of oars. Each room or space, we may gather from the sagas, was the berth of eight men, and was divided into half-rooms, starboard and larboard, of four men for working the corresponding oars. When the ships were advancing two men worked the oar, one covered them with his shield from the enemy's missiles, and one shot at the enemy. When the ships got into line, they were bound together by their stems and sterns; and the forecastles and poops, which were decked, and raised high in the construction of their vessels, and sometimes with temporary stages or castles on them, were the posts of the fighting men. The main manœuvre seems to have consisted in laying the high forecastles and poops favourably for striking down with stones, arrows, and casting spears, upon a lower vessel. They used grappling irons for throwing into the enemy's ship, and dragging her towards them. But these and similar observations will occur to the reader of the many sea-fights recounted in the Heimskringla.

One of the most indispensable articles for a large vessel,—one for which no substitute can be found, and which cannot be produced single-handed, but requires the co-operation of many branches of industry,—is the



anchor. Boats may be anchored by a stone, or a hook of strong wood sunk by a heavy stone attached to it; but vessels of from 50 to 111 feet of keel, such as the war-ships and last-ships of the Northmen, must have carried anchors of from ten to fifteen hundred weight at the least, and we read of their riding out heavy gales. To forge, or procure in any way such anchors, betokens a higher state of the useful arts among these pagan Northmen than we usually allow them.\* Iron is the mother of all the useful arts; and a people who could smelt iron from the ore, and work it into all that is required for ships of considerable size, from a nail to an anchor, could not have been in a state of such utter barbarism as they are represented to us. We may fairly doubt of their gross ignorance and want of civilisation in their pagan state, when we find they had a literature of their own, and laws, institutions, social arrangements, a spirit and character very analogous to the English, if not the source from which the English flowed; and were in advance of all the Christian nations in one branch at least of the useful arts, in which great combinations of them are required—the building, fitting out, and navigating large vessels.

\* The Museum of Northern Antiquities at Copenhagen contains many articles, both of ornament and use, which display great ingenuity and good workmanship in metal, and betoken a considerable division of trades and of labour in their production, even in the earliest times.

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OF THE DISCOVERY OF GREENLAND AND AMERICA BY  
THE NORTHMEN.

THE discovery of Greenland by the Icelanders about the year 981, and the establishment of considerable colonies on one or on both sides of that vast peninsula which terminates at Cape Farewell,—in which Christianity and Christian establishments, parishes, churches, and even monasteries, were flourishing, or at least existing to such an extent that from 1124 to 1389 there was a regular succession of bishops, of whom seventeen are named, for their superintendence,—are facts which no longer admit of any reasonable doubt. The documentary evidence of the saga,—which gave not merely vague accounts of such a discovery and settlement, but statistical details, with the names and the distances from each other of farms or townships, of which there were, according to accounts of the 14th century, ninety in what was called Vestribygd or the western settlement, with four churches, and 190 in the Eystribygd or eastern settlement, with one cathedral, eleven other churches, two towns, and three or four monasteries,—bears all the internal evidence of truth, in the consistency and simplicity of the statements. The saga accounts also are supported by the incidental notice of Greenland by contemporary writers. Adam of Bremen mentions that the people of Greenland, among other northern people, sent to his diocesan, Adalbert archbishop of Bremen, who died in 1075, for clergymen, who accordingly were sent to them. The first bishop of Greenland men-

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tioned in the Icelandic accounts was Arnold, who was ordained by the archbishop of Lund, in Scania, in 1121. The bishopric of Greenland was afterwards under the archbishop of Drontheim; and Alf, or Alfus, who is supposed to have died about 1378 in Greenland, is the last who is known to have officiated there. In 1389, Henry, according to Torfæus, was appointed bishop; and in 1406 Askil was appointed to succeed Henry, in case he was dead. But it does not appear, according to Torfæus, that either of them ever reached Greenland; but, since Torfæus's time, a document is said to have been discovered relative to a marriage settlement executed at Garda, the name of the town or episcopal seat in Greenland, by the last bishop, whose name was Endrede Andreasson, not Askil, three years later, viz. in 1409. In 1261, the Greenland settlements appear to have been regularly annexed to the crown of Norway by King Hakon Hakonson, who sent messengers to the people of Greenland; and in the submission which the messengers brought back, it was agreed "that all fines for murders, whether committed by Norwegian or Greenland people, on inhabited or uninhabited land, or even under the pole itself, should be paid to the king." The payments for murders, or other capital offences compounded for by mulcts to the king and relations, were then a considerable branch of the royal revenues. In 1388-9, Henry the bishop, on setting out for Greenland, received instructions to keep the king's revenues safely warehoused in a certain fixed place, those years in which no vessels came to Greenland; which shows that the communications with Iceland were not yearly or regular. A brief of Pope Nicholas V., in 1448, to the bishops of Skalholt and Holum in Iceland, states "that his beloved children dwelling in an island called Greenland, on the utmost verge of the ocean north of Norway, and who are under the archbishop of

Drontheim, have raised his compassion by their complaint that after having been Christians for 600 years, and converted by the holy Saint Olaf, and having erected many sacred buildings and a splendid cathedral on said island, in which divine service was diligently performed, they had thirty years ago been attacked by the heathens of the neighbouring coast, who came with a fleet against them, and killed and dispersed many, and made slaves of those who were able-bodied; but having now gathered together again, they crave the services of priests and a bishop." The pope therefore desires those bishops, as the nearest, to consult with their diocesan, if the distance permit, and to send the Greenland people a suitable man to be their bishop. The sudden extinction of a colony, which must have attained considerable importance and population to have had a regular succession of bishops for 250 years, is much more extraordinary than its establishment. It vanished, as it were, from the face of the earth, about the end of the 14th or beginning of the 15th century; and even the memory of its former existence passed away. The Christian colony established in the 10th century in Greenland, with its churches, monasteries, bishops, was considered, notwithstanding the internal and the collateral evidence supporting the sagas, to be a pious delusion of the middle ages, founded on a mere saga fable. The fable itself is short, and appears to have nothing fabulous in it. In the beginning of the 10th century, an Icelander or a Norwegian, called Gunbiorn, son of Ulf Kraka, was driven by a storm to the west of Iceland, and discovered some rocks, which he called Gunbiorn Skerry, and a great country, of which he brought the news to Iceland. Soon after one Eric Red, or Eric the Red, was condemned at Thornæs Thing, in Iceland, to banishment for a murder he had committed. He fitted out a vessel, and told his friends he would go



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and find the land which Gunbiorn had seen, and come back and let them know what kind of country it was. Eric sailed west from the Sneefieldsjokul, in Iceland, to the east coast of Greenland, and then followed the coast southwards, looking for a convenient place for dwelling in. He sailed westward round a cape which he called Hvarf\*, and passed the first winter on an island, which from him was called Eric's Isle. After passing three years in examining the coast he returned to Iceland, and gave such a fine account of the country that it was called Greenland; and the following year twenty-five vessels with colonists set out with him to settle in it, but only about one half reached their destination, some having turned back, and some being lost in the ice. About fourteen years after Eric was settled in Greenland, his son Leif, who afterwards discovered Vinland, went over to Norway to King Olaf Tryggvesson, who had him instructed in Christianity, or baptized, and sent a priest with him to Greenland, who baptized Eric and all the colonists. Many came over from Iceland from time to time, and the country was settled wherever it was inhabitable. In this account there is nothing incredible or inconsistent. Greenland was to Iceland what Iceland had been to Norway — a place of refuge for the surplus population, for those who had no land or means of living. Iceland was originally an aristocratic republic, — a settlement made by people of family and wealth, who alone could fit out vessels for emigrating to it; and these landnammen took possession of the land. Of the lower class many in course of time must have become retainers, tenants, or workpeople under the higher class, and have been ready to emigrate to a country

\* Hvarf appears a name given to extreme capes from which the coast turns or bends in a different direction. Cape Wrath, the extreme westerly point of the coast of Scotland, has originally been called Hvarf, and in time changed to *Wrath*.

where they could get land of their own, and at a distance little more than half of that from Norway to Iceland. The discovery and colonisation of land within a distance so short, compared to the usual voyage from Iceland to Norway, is not incredible, nor wonderful. The means of subsistence in both countries have probably been very much the same. Seals, whales, fish of various kinds, reindeer, hares, wild fowl, would give subsistence; oil, skins, feathers, furs—which in the middle age were in great estimation for dress,—would give surplus products for exchange. Cattle, if we may believe the sagas, were kept in considerable numbers. Corn was not produced in either country. The balance of the natural products which man may subsist on,—such as game, reindeer, seals, fish, and of furs and feathers for barter,—may have been even in favour of Greenland. The extinction of such a colony, after existing for 400 years, is certainly more extraordinary than its establishment, and almost justifies the doubt whether it ever had existed. Several causes are given for this extraordinary circumstance. One is the gradual accumulation of ice on both sides of this vast peninsula, by which not only the pasturages, and temperature in which cattle could subsist, may have been diminished, and with these one main branch of the subsistence of the population; but also the direct communication with small vessels coasting along the shores and through the sounds of Greenland may have been interrupted, and the voyage round Cape Farewell outside of the isles, and ice, and sounds, have been too tempestuous for such vessels as they possessed. Another cause was probably the great pestilence called the black death, which appeared in Europe about 1349, and which seems to have been more universal and destructive than the cholera, the plague, or any other visitation known in the history of the human race. It extinguished entirely populations



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much more numerous, and more wholesomely fed, clothed, and lodged, than we can suppose a colony in Greenland to have been, and it seems to have raged particularly in the north. It is supposed by some that this pestilence either swept off the whole population of the colony, or weakened it so much that the survivors were at last cut off by the Skrælingers or Esquimaux, with whom the colonists appear to have been always in hostility. The inequality between the most contemptible race of savages and the most civilised people of Europe would be but small, or the advantage probably on the side of the uncivilised, in all warfare between them before the use of fire-arms; which, next to Christianity, has been the great means of diffusing and securing civilisation among the human race. The pope's brief of 1448, if it be a genuine document,—and it is said to have been found in the archives of the Vatican by a Professor Mallet some years ago, but how he got there is not shown,—would prove the truth of the conjecture which has been made, that the colonists were overpowered by the Skrælingers. The existing traditions among the Esquimaux\*, of their having come in their canoes and surprised and killed all the Kabloon or European people in old times, is not worth much, as evidently it is a tradition only of the moment produced by leading questions put to them. No tradition in any country seems to exist but as an impersonation, as an account of an individual person doing a thing; and it is the individual and his personal feats, not the great act itself, that is delivered by tradition as its principal subject matter. Another cause was, that Queen Margaret, on whom the three northern crowns had devolved in

\* The Esquimaux appear, by the narrative of his discoveries on the north coast of America by the late Mr. Thomas Simpson (1843), to be by no means the poor physically weak people met with at present in Davis's Straits, and described by Captain Parry.

1387, had made the trade to Greenland, Iceland, the Feroe Isles, Halogaland, and Finland, a royal monopoly, which could only be carried on in ships belonging to, or licensed by, the sovereign; and certain merchants who had visited Greenland about that time were accused of a treasonable violation of the royal edict, we are told by Torfæus in his "*Grænlandia Antiqua*," and only escaped punishment by pleading that stress of weather had driven them to those parts. Her successor, Eric of Pomerania, was too much engaged in Swedish affairs, and his successor, Christopher of Bavaria, in his contests with the Hanseatic League, to think of the colony of Greenland. Under the monopoly of trade the Icelanders could have no vessels, and no object for sailing to Greenland; and the vessels fitted out by government, or its lessees, to trade with them, would only be ready to leave Denmark or Bergen for Iceland, at the season they ought to have been ready to leave Iceland to go to Greenland. The colony gradually fell into oblivion. Its former existence even had become a matter of disputed or neglected tradition. Christian III., who came to the throne 1534, abolished the prohibition of sailing to Greenland; and a few feeble attempts were made at discovery by him and his successors from time to time, and at last even these were given up. It was not until 1721 that a Norwegian minister, Hans Egede,—one of those rare men who go on to their purpose unmoved by any selfish interest, and to whom fame, wealth, honour, comfort, are neither object nor reward,—resigned his living in Norway, and obtained permission, after much difficulty and many petitions to government, to settle himself as a missionary on the coast of Davis's Straits among the Esquimaux. The general opinion was, that the lost colony of Old Greenland was situated on the east coast of the peninsula, and not within Davis's Straits;



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and it does not appear that Hans Egede himself, at first, had any idea that he was settling upon the ruined seats of Christian predecessors of the same tongue and mother country. It is a curious paragraph in the history of the human race, showing how true it is that in the tide of time man and his affairs return to where they set out,—that Christian churches, bishops, and consequently people in some numbers, and in some state of civilisation, had existed, been extinguished, and forgotten, and again on the same spot, after the lapse of 400 years, men have attempted to live, colonise, and Christianise. The feeble attempt in our times, the struggle to subsist, and the trifling amount of population in the modern colony after a century, are strangely in contrast with the state of the old colony. There are but about 150 Europeans at present in these Danish colonies; and the whole population of the natives, from Cape Farewell as far north as man can live, is reckoned under 6000 people, and about five or six vessels only are employed in trading with them; and this is in a country which formerly subsisted a population of European descent, which had at least sixteen ecclesiastical establishments or parishes, a bishop, monasteries, and consequently a number greatly exceeding 150 souls. The old colonists do not appear to have ever made converts among the natives, and their numbers, which must at one time have been considerable, appear to have found abundant subsistence; for we read in the sagas of vessels with sixty men arriving in autumn, being subsisted all winter, and fitted out in spring, and victualled for voyages of uncertain and long duration: and now if one of the vessels fitted out by charitable contributions by the sect of the Moravians to carry food to their missionaries be delayed for a season, they are in danger of starving. Is it man or nature that has changed? Are men less vigorous, less energetic,

less enduring and hardy, than in those old times of the Northmen? or is the land, the sea, the climate less adapted now for the subsistence of the human animal?

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The opinion of almost all antiquaries was, that the main settlement of the old colonists,—the Eystribygd, with its 190 townships, its town of Gardar, its cathedral, bishop's seat, and twelve or thirteen churches,—was on the east coast of Greenland, somewhere on the coast north of Cape Farewell, inaccessible now from ice; and the less important Vestribygd to have been west of Cape Farewell, within Davis's Straits. Others supposed that both settlements were on the east coast of Greenland, and that the old colonists did not know that Greenland had a west coast from Cape Farewell. The opinions were founded on certain ancient sailing directions found in the sagas, especially in a saga of King Olaf Tryggvesson, in which it is mentioned that from Stad, the westernmost part of Norway, it is a voyage of seven days' sailing due west to Hornpoint, the easternmost part of Iceland; and that from Sneekfieldness, the point of Iceland nearest to Greenland, it is a voyage of four days' sailing, also due west, to Greenland: and a rock called Gunbiørnskerri is stated to be half-way between Iceland and Greenland; but this course, says one of the ancient accounts of unknown date, but certainly of the 14th century, "was the old way of sailing; but now the ice from the northern gulf has set down so near to this skerry, that nobody can take this course without danger of life." This rock, skerry, or isle, midway between the coast of Iceland and that of Greenland, is proved by Scoresby and other navigators to have no existence; and the east coast of Greenland, as far as it has been possible to explore it, is found to be more inclement, icebound, and in every way less adapted naturally to afford subsistence to man, than the west coast within



Cape Farewell; although the Eystribygd is represented in all the sagas as the most populous settlement, having 190, and the other only 90 townships. It is now generally admitted that the east coast of Greenland never was inhabited at all by the old colonists; that their east and west settlements had no reference to being east or west of Cape Farewell, but to being easterly or westerly from some place within Davis's Straits, and which formed their division between the two settlements; and in this view the east settlement would be the country nearest to Cape Farewell, and, as at present, the best provided with the natural means of subsistence; and the western and poorer settlement would be the country beyond it to the north; and that Gunbiornskerry was not in the midway, or half-way, as it had been interpreted, in the sea between Iceland and Greenland, but some island on the east coast of Greenland, which was half-way, in point of distance and time, between Iceland and the eastern settlement in Greenland. From it they took a new departure, and coasted along, with sails and oars, round Cape Hvarf, or Cape Farewell, and up Davis's Straits to the eastern settlement. Hans Egide, his son Paul, and others, had from time to time examined and sent home accounts of remains of ancient buildings which they had found on their missionary excursions. Arctander, as early as 1777, had made reports of such remains. The Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen took up the subject with great zeal in this century; and researches have been made of which the result is a kind of synthetic proof, as it may be called, of the veracity of the saga. The remains of former inhabitation of the country, of houses, paths, walls, stepping-stones, churches, foundations of rows of dwellings, show that the saga accounts have not been exaggerated; and it must give every fair unprejudiced reader a confidence which he had not

before in the sagas when he finds in this — the most questionable perhaps of all the saga statements — that a considerable Icelandic colony actually had existed in Greenland from the 10th century. The facts they state are fully supported by the discoveries made on the spot within this century. A similar moral confidence in the sagas is given to the few saga readers who happen to be acquainted with the Orkney Islands, from finding, in the Orkneyinga Saga, a minute and accurate knowledge of places, distances, names, and other details of the localities mentioned. In this case of Greenland the remains discovered carry conviction to all. At Karkortog, a branch of a long fiord called Igalik, in latitude  $60^{\circ} 50'$  north, and longitude  $44^{\circ} 37'$ , near to the settlement of Julianahope, is a ruin of a building 51 feet in length by 25 feet in breadth, with well-built stone walls, 4 feet thick, standing to the height of 16 and 18 feet; and with two round arched windows, one in each gable, and four other windows not arched, on each side, and with two door-ways, — evidently intended for a church. This appears the most perfect of the ruins yet discovered. Foundations, with walls in some parts 4 feet high, have been found of buildings 120 feet in length by 100 feet in breadth; and from such rows being found in various places, the families may be supposed to have lived in contiguous houses. But single dwellings also have been used, as foundations overgrown with dwarf-willow, and the berry-bearing shrubs, are found in favourable situations on the sides of the fiords. In what appears to have been a church, the foundations being 96 feet long by 48 feet broad, at the extremity of the fiord Igalikkoi, latitude  $60^{\circ} 55'$ , a stone with a Runic inscription was found in 1830; and to the readers of Runic the inscription offered no difficulty: — “Vigdis, M. D. Hvilir Her. Glæde Gud Sal Hennar;” that is, “Vigdisa rests here: God bless her soul.” The



meaning of the letters M. D. following the name, and which probably refer to the person's family, as Magnus's Daughter, or some similar distinctive use, form the only obscurity. In 1831 the missionary De Fries found near Igigeitum, in latitude  $60^{\circ}$ , a tombstone used as a door-lintel to a Greenland house, with an inscription in Roman characters — "Her Hvilir Hro Kolgrims;" which is, "Here rests Hroar or Hroaldr Kolgrimson." But the most interesting of these inscriptions is one discovered in 1824, in the island Kingigtorsook in Baffin's Bay, in latitude  $72^{\circ} 55'$  north, longitude  $56^{\circ} 5'$  west of Greenwich; as it shows how bold these Northmen have been in their seamanship, and how far they had penetrated into regions supposed to have been unvisited by man before the voyages of our modern navigators. It now appears that Captain Parry and Captain Lyon had only sailed over seas which had been explored by these Northmen in the 12th century. The inscription found in this high latitude was sent to three of the greatest antiquaries and Runic scholars in Europe — Finn Magnusen, Professor Rask, and Dr. Bryniulfson in Iceland; and, without communication with each other, they arrived at the same interpretation, viz. "Erling Sighvatson and Biorne Thordarson and Eindrid Oddson, on Saturday before Ascension Week, raised these marks and cleared ground. 1135." The meaning is, that in token of having taken possession of the land, they had raised marks or mounds of which Kragh and Stephenson observed some vestiges on the spot where the inscription was found, and had cleared a space of ground around, being a symbol of appropriation of the land. The interesting part of this inscription has not been sufficiently noticed and examined. In the Romish church the days of the Ascension Week are of peculiar solemnity. The priests, accompanied by the people, walk in long processions with lighted torches around

the churches and consecrated ground, chanting, and sprinkling holy water. From the numerous processions going on at this festival, the Ascension Week was called the Gang Dayis, or Ganging Dayis, in old Scotch, — is still called the Gang Week in some parts of England, — was called Gang Dagas in Anglo-Saxon, — and Ascension Day, Gagn Dagr in the Icelandic; and the going in procession, not the Gagn or Gain of Spiritual Victory, has given the name to the Dies Victoriæ in the northern languages. It appears that there are two festivals which might be called Gagn Dagr in the Romish church, from their being celebrated by processions: one is the Dies Victoriæ Maximus, about the 24th of April; the other procession day is about the 14th of May; and the Laukardakin fyrir Gakndag of the inscription may be the Saturday before either of these procession days. But, to whichever it refers, the people who made these marks at that time of the year must have wintered upon the island. By the accounts of all northern voyagers, the sea in Baffin's Bay is not navigable at or near Ascension Week, or any church festival to which Gakn Dagr applies. We must either suppose that these Northmen, without any of our modern outfit of ships for wintering in such high latitudes, did not only winter there, but found the country so endurable as to take possession of it by a formal act indicating an intention to settle in the island; or we must suppose that the cold, within so recent an historical period as 800 years ago, has increased so much in the northern parts of the globe, that countries are now uninhabitable by man which were formerly not so. Both, perhaps, may be taken into account. The capability of enduring cold or heat in extreme degrees may be acquired by individuals or tribes, and the habits and functions of the body become adapted to the temperature. The advance of ice locally in Davis's Straits, and on the east coast of



Greenland, seems also ascertained by the yearly increase of the fields of ice in the neighbouring seas within the experience of our whale fishers.

The discovery of America, or Vinland, in the 11th century, by the same race of enduring enterprising seamen, is not less satisfactorily established by documentary evidence than the discovery and colonisation of Greenland; but it rests entirely upon documentary evidence, which cannot, as in the case of Greenland, be substantiated by any thing to be discovered in America. One or two adventurers made voyages, came to new countries to the south and west of Greenland, landed, repeated their visits, and even remained for one or two years trading for skins with the natives, and felling timber to take home in their ships; but they established no colony, left none behind them to multiply, and, as in Greenland, to construct, in stone, memorials of their existence on the coast of America. All that can be proved, or that is required to be proved, for establishing the priority of the discovery of America by the Northmen, is that the saga or traditional account of these voyages in the 11th century was committed to writing at a known date, viz. between 1387 and 1395, in a manuscript of unquestionable authenticity, of which these particular sagas or accounts relative to Vinland form but a small portion; and that this known date was eighty years before Columbus visited Iceland to obtain nautical information, viz. in 1477, when he must have heard of this written account of Vinland; and it was not till 1492 that he discovered America. This simple fact, established on documents altogether incontrovertible, is sufficient to prove all that is wanted to be proved, or can be proved, and is much more clearly and ably stated by Thormod Torfæus, the great antiquary of the last century, than it has been since, in his very rare little tract, "Historia Vinlandiæ Anti-

quæ, 1707." This, however, has not been thought sufficient by modern antiquaries, and great research and talent have been expended in overlaying this simple documentary fact, on which alone the claim of the Icelanders to the priority of discovery rests, with a mass of documents of secondary importance and no validity. These are of secondary importance; because the circumstances which led to or happened upon these voyages, the family descent, or even identity of the adventurers, and the truth or falsehood of the details related, do not either confirm or shake the simple fact on which every thing rests,—that a discovery of a new land to the west and south was made and recorded, taken out of the mere traditionary state, and fixed in writing in 1387, or 100 years before Columbus's first voyage. They are of no validity; because, after Columbus's first voyage in 1492, the seafaring people in every country would be talking of and listening to accounts of discoveries, new or old, — imagination would be let loose, — and old sagas would be filled up and new invented; so that no document relative to this question is of real validity which is not proved at setting out to be older than 1492, — that is to say, not merely an older story which may have circulated in the traditionary state from the 10th or 11th century, but older than 1492 on paper or parchment. Saga antiquaries are sometimes given to confounding together in their speculations these two very distinct ages of their documents. The only document of this kind is the one pointed out by Torfæus in 1707, which is in itself good and sufficient, and beyond all suspicion; and to link it to documents of uncertain or suspicious date, or to details which may or may not be true, and which require the aid of imagination, prejudice, or good will to believe, as well as of sober judgment, is weakening, not strengthening, the argu-



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ment. Torfæus kindled a light which the moths have gathered about, and almost put out.

In 1697 Peringskiöld published the "Heimskringla" of Snorrio Sturleson, with a Latin and Swedish translation of the Icelandic. It was discovered and pointed out by Torfæus, that Peringskiöld must have had some inferior manuscript of the work before him, because eight chapters of the Saga of King Olaf Tryggvesson, viz. from Chapter 105. to Chapter 113., are interpolated, and are not to be found in any genuine manuscript of Snorrio's work. These eight chapters contain the accounts of the voyages of Leif and of Karlsefne to Vinland. There is internal evidence in Snorrio's work itself that these eight chapters are a clumsy interpolation by Peringskiöld, or his authority; for they interrupt Snorrio's narrative in the most interesting period of King Olaf Tryggvesson's life, and have no connection with the transactions or personages preceding or following; whereas all Snorrio's episodes are, with surprising art and judgment, connected with what goes before or is to follow, and are brought in exactly at the right place. It may be thought, at first sight, that the very circumstance of a man of Snorrio's knowledge and judgment in the sagas not knowing, or knowing not adopting, the account of the discovery of Vinland given in these eight chapters subsequently interpolated in his work, is conclusive against their value and authenticity. But it is to be remembered that although he probably knew of them, the subject was altogether foreign to his work. Vinland was an object of no interest in his days, and had not, like Greenland, Iceland, the Feroe Isles, or Orkney, been occupied as a colony, or part of the dominions of Norway, and had not employed any of the historical personages of whom he treats; and therefore it would have been inconsistent with his work to introduce the obscure, and in his time unimportant fact, of the dis-

covery of new land, or the adventures of the discoverers. The eight chapters in question, by whomsoever they were interpolated into Snorro Sturleson's work, proved to be taken, with few variations, and none of any importance, from the eighth chapter of the Saga of King Olaf Tryggvesson in the "Codex Flatoiensis." This saga gives more details of the reign of that king than Snorro Sturleson's saga of it, and is no doubt the source from which he drew his account, using it often verbatim.

The "Flateyar Annall, or Codex Flatoiensis," by far the most important of Icelandic manuscripts, takes its name from the island Flatö, in Bredefjord in Iceland, where it had been long preserved, and where Bishop Swendson of Skalholt purchased it, about 1650, from the owner, Jonas Torfeson, for King Frederic III., giving in exchange for it the perpetual exemption from land-tax of a small estate of the owner. The manuscript is in large folio, beautifully written on parchment. On the first page stands — "This book is owned by Ion Hakonson. Here are, first, songs; then how Norway was inhabited or settled; then of Eric Vidforla (the far-travelled); thereafter of Olaf Tryggvesson, and all his deeds\*; then next the saga of King Olaf the Saint, with all his deeds, and therewith the sagas of the Orkney Earls; then the saga of Swerrer, and thereafter the saga of Hakon the Old, with the sagas of King Magnus his son; then are deeds of Einar Sokkeson of Greenland, thereafter of Helge and Ulf the Bad; then begin annals from the time the world was made, showing all to this present time that is come. The priest Ion Thordarson has written from Eric Vidforla, and the two sagas of the

\* Thattr does not exactly mean deeds, but excerpts or short accounts of deeds. We use in Scotland the expression, "a tait o' woo,"—a little wool pulled out of a fleece; which corresponds to the Icelandic thattr, an excerpt.



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Olafs ; and priest Magnus Thorhallsson has written from thence, and also what is written before, and has illuminated the whole. God Almighty and the Holy Virgin Mary bless those who wrote, and him who dictated." The writer of this paragraph says, that the annals written out by the priest Magnus Thorhallsson from the beginning of the world come down to the present time, and he has consequently been a contemporary of the scribe Magnus Thorhallsson. These annals end with the year 1395, and the time at which the writing was concluded is thus distinctly ascertained. The time at which the writing was commenced is also distinctly ascertained ; for in the piece on " how Norway was inhabited," in giving the series of kings, it is said, on coming to King Olaf Hakonson, " He was king when this book was writing ; and then were elapsed from the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ 1300 and 80 and 7 years." The dates of the beginning and ending of this beautiful piece of penmanship are thus fixed, and the handwriting of each of the scribes perfectly known. The " Codex Flatoiensis " is not an original work of one author, but a collection of sagas transcribed from older manuscripts, and arranged in so far chronologically that the accounts are placed under the reign in which the events they tell of happened, although not connected with it or with each other. Under the saga of Olaf Tryggvesson are comprehended the sagas of the Feroe Islands ; of the Vikings of Jomsburg ; of Eric Red, and Leif his son, the discoverers of Greenland and Vinland ; and the voyages of Karlsefne to Vinland, and all the circumstances, true or false, of their adventures. It is evident that the main fact is that of a discovery of a western land being recorded in writing between 1387 and 1395 ; and whether the minor circumstances, such as the personal adventures of the discoverers, or the exact localities in America which they visited, be or

be not known, cannot affect this fact, — nor the very strong side-fact, that eighty years after this fact was recorded in writing, in no obscure manuscript, but in one of the most beautiful works of penmanship in Europe, Columbus came to Iceland\* from Bristol, in 1477, on purpose to gain nautical information, and must have heard of the written accounts of discoveries recorded in it. It is as great an error to prove too much as to prove too little. Enough is proved for

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\* The English trade with Iceland appears to have been very considerable. Annals in manuscript of 1411 and 1413, quoted by Finn Magnuson, in his Treatise on the English Trade to Iceland in the “*Nordisk Tidsskrift for Oldkyndighed*,” mention, besides plundering and piracy committed by the English, proclamations of Eric of Pomerania against trading with them. In 1413 there were thirty English vessels on the Iceland coast. In 1415, in the harbour of Havnefiord there were six English vessels at one time. The trade had been made a monopoly, and the English appear to have forcibly broken through its regulations, in spite of the proclamations of their own and the Norwegian sovereign. The Icelandic bishops at that time — viz. John Johnson, bishop of Holum, and his successor in 1429, John Williamson — were Englishmen; and also the bishop of Skalholt in 1430, John Garrickson, appears to have come from England. Bristol and Hull appear, in 1474, to have had a great share of the trade to Iceland. It appears, from the Memoir of Columbus by his son Fernando, that in February, 1477, his father visited Tyle (Thule) or Friesland, “an island as large as England, with which the English, especially those of Bristol, drive a great trade.” It is a curious coincidence that he mentions he came to the island without meeting any ice, and the sea was not frozen; and in an authentic document of March in the same year, 1477, it is mentioned as a kind of testimony of the act of which the document is the protocol, that there was no snow whatever upon the ground at the date it was executed, — a rare circumstance, by which it would be held in remembrance. In the year 1477, Magnus Eyolfson was bishop of Skalholt: he had been abbot of the monastery at Helgafel, where the old accounts concerning Vinland and Greenland were, it is supposed, originally written and preserved, and the discoverers were people originally from that neighbourhood. Columbus came in spring to the south end of Iceland, where Whalefiord was the usual harbour; and it is known that Bishop Magnus, exactly in the spring of that year, was on a visitation in that part of his see, and it is to be presumed Columbus must have met and conversed with him. These are curious coincidences of small circumstances, which have their weight. — See *Captain Zahrtmann on the Voyage of Zeno*, and *F. Magnuson on the English Trade to Iceland*, 2d vol. of *Nordisk Tidsskrift*, 1833.



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the purpose of establishing the priority of discovery ; but when the northern antiquaries proceed to prove the details,—to establish the exact points in the state of Massachusetts at which Leif put up his wooden booths, and where Karlsefne and his wife Gudrid lived, and Freidisa committed her wholesale slaughter, and to make imaginary discoveries of Runic inscriptions and buildings erected by Northmen in Rhode Island,—they are poets, not antiquaries. The subject is of so much interest both in Europe and America, and so much has been written in very expensive books to prove what is not susceptible of proof, and of no importance if proved, that a few pages must be bestowed on it.

• From the adventurous spirit of the Northmen in the 11th century, — from their habits of living on board ship, on their ordinary viking cruises, for many more weeks and months together than are required for a voyage from Iceland to America, — from their being at home on board, and accustomed on their sea expeditions up the Mediterranean, to the White Sea, and to Iceland direct across the ocean, to a sea life, — it is not improbable that they should have undertaken a voyage of discovery to the west and south, and have renewed it when they found a land which produced building timber and skins to repay them. It was certainly not seamanship that was wanting among them in those ages, but science only. The class of vessels in which they sailed made them in a great measure independent of the science of navigation ; because their vessels were of an easy draught of water, and they had a command with their oars and their numerous crews over their vessels, which made a lee shore, or other unfavourable position, of no such importance as to modern ships. In size, and as sea-boats, their vessels in general were probably equal or superior to those in which Columbus made his first

voyage. One of Columbus's vessels is understood to have been only a half-decked craft. Sebastian Cabot, and some of the earliest explorers of Baffin's Bay, sailed in vessels under thirty tons. The Anna Pink, which accompanied Lord Anson half round the world, was a vessel of eighteen tons. In their shipping, seamanship, and habits of sea life and endurance, there was certainly nothing to make it, *à priori*, improbable that they should undertake a voyage of discovery to the south and west of Greenland. The details of adventures on such a voyage may not be correct, and yet the fact itself true. The following is an abridgment, as short as possible, of the details, and the conclusions drawn from them as to the localities in America which they visited. The eight chapters themselves are annexed in the Appendix.

Eric Red, in spring, 986, emigrated from Iceland to Greenland with Heriulf Bardson. He fixed his abode at Brattalid, in Ericsfiord; and Heriulf at Heriulfsness. Biorne, the son of the latter, was absent in Norway at the time, and finding on his return that his father was gone, resolved to follow him, and put to sea. As winter was approaching, they had bad weather, northerly winds and fogs, and did not know where they were. When it cleared up they saw a land without mountains, but with many small hills, and covered with wood. This not answering the description of Greenland, they turned about and left it on the larboard hand; and sailing two days they came to another land, flat, and covered with wood. Then they stood out to sea with a south-west wind, and saw a third land, high, and the mountains covered with glaciers; and coasting along it they saw it was an island. Biorne did not land, but stood out to sea with the same south-west wind, and sailing with fresh gales reached, in four days more, Heriulfsness in Greenland, his father's abode.



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Some years after this, supposed to be about 994, Biorne was in Norway on a visit to Earl Eric, and was much blamed, when he told of his discovery, for not having examined the countries more accurately. Leif, a son of Eric Red, bought his ship, when Biorne returned to Greenland, and with a crew of thirty-five men set out, about the year 1000, to look for these lands. He came first to the land which Biorne had seen last, landed, found no grass, but vast icy mountains in the interior, and between them and the shore a plain of flat slaty stones (hella), and called the country Hellaland. They put to sea, and came to another country, which was level, covered with woods, with many cliffs of white sand, and a low coast, and called the country Markland (outfield or woodland). They again stood out to sea with a north-east wind, and after two days' sailing made land, and came to an island eastward of the mainland, and entered into a channel between the island and a point projecting north-east from the mainland. They sailed eastward, saw much ground laid dry at ebb tide, and at last went on shore at a place where a river which came from a lake fell into the sea. They brought their vessel through the river into the lake, and anchored. Here they put up some log huts; but, after resolving to winter there, they constructed larger booths or houses. After lodging themselves, Leif divided his people into two companies, to be employed by turns in exploring the country and working about the houses. One of the exploring party, a German by birth, called Tyrker, was one day missing. They went out to look for him, and soon met him, talking German, rolling his eyes, and beside himself. He at last told them in Norse, as they did not understand German, that he had been up the country, and had discovered vines and grapes; adding, "that he should know what vines and grapes were, as he was born in

a country in which they were in plenty." They now occupied themselves in hewing timber for loading the vessel, and collecting grapes with which they filled the ship's boat. Leif called the country Vinland. They sailed in spring, and returned to Greenland.

Leif's brother, Thorwald, set out, in the year 1002, to Vinland in Leif's vessel, and came to his booths or houses, and wintered there. In spring Thorwald sent a party in the boat to explore the coast to the south. They found the country beautiful, well wooded, with but little space between the woods and the sea, and long stretches of white sand, and also many islands and shoals; and on one island found a corn barn, but no other traces of people. They returned in autumn to Leif's booths. Next summer Thorwald sailed with the large vessel, first eastward, then northward, past a headland opposite to another headland, and forming a bay. They called the first headland Kialarness (Keel Ness). They then sailed into the nearest fiord, to a headland covered with wood. Thorwald went on shore, and was so pleased that he said "he should like to stay there." On going on board they observed three hillocks on the sandy shore. They went up to them, and found they were three canoes, with three Skrælingers under each. They killed eight of them, and one made his escape in his canoe. A great number afterwards came in skin-canoes and attacked them. They were repulsed; but Thorwald was wounded by an arrow and died, and according to his directions was buried at the promontory where he had expressed his wish to stay, or take up his abode, with a cross at the head and one at the foot of his grave; and the place was called Crossness. His companions returned to Leif's booths, wintered there, and in spring sailed to Greenland.

Thorstein, Eric's third son, set out in the same ship, with his wife Gudrid, and a crew of twenty-five



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men, to bring home his brother's body ; but after driving about all summer they returned, without making the land, to Lysnfiord in Greenland, where Thorstein died, and his wife Gudrid returned to Ericsfiord.

Next summer, viz. 1006, two ships from Iceland came to Greenland. One was commanded by Thorfinn, called Karlsefne (of manly endowment); the other by Biorne Grimulfson. A third ship was commanded by Thorward. Karlsefne had married in the course of the winter Gudrid, the widow of Thorwald, and by her advice resolved on going to Vinland in spring. Thorward had married Freydisa, a natural daughter of Eric ; and the three ships set out with 160 men, and all kinds of live stock, to establish a colony in Vinland. They sailed first to the Westerbygd (within Davis's Straits), and to Biarney (Disco Isle). From thence they sailed in a southerly direction to Hellaland, where they found many foxes. From thence, sailing two days to the south, they came to Markland, a wooded country stocked with animals. Then they sailed south-west for a long time, having the land to starboard, until they came to Kialarness, where there were great deserts, and long beaches and sands. When they had passed these, the land was indented with inlets. They had two Scots with them, Hake and Hekia, whom Leif had formerly received from King Olaf Tryggvesson, and who were very swift of foot. They were put on shore to explore the country to the south-west, and in three days they returned with some grapes, and some ears of wheat, which grew wild in that country. They continued their course until they came to a fiord which penetrated far into the land. Off the mouth of it was an island with strong currents round it, and also up in the fiord. They found vast numbers of eyder ducks on the island, so that they could

scarcely walk without treading on their eggs. They called the island Straumay (Stream Isle), and the fiord Straumfiord. A party of eight men, commanded by Thorhall, left them here, and went north to seek for Vinland. Karlsefne proceeded with Snorro, Biorne, and the rest, in all 151 men, southwards. Those who went northwards passed Kialarness; but were driven by westerly gales off the land, and to the coast of Ireland, where, it was afterwards reported, they were made slaves. Karlsefne and his men arrived at the place where a river issuing from a lake falls into the sea. Opposite to the mouth of the river were large islands. They steered into the lake, and called the place Hop (the Hope). On the low grounds they found fields of wheat growing wild, and on the rising grounds vines.

One morning a number of skin-canoes came to them. The people were sallow-coloured, ill-looking, with ugly heads of hair, large eyes, and broad cheeks; and after looking at the strangers they retired round the cape to the south-west. Karlsefne put up dwelling-houses a little above the bay, and they wintered there: no snow fell, and their cattle lived in the open field. On the shortest day the sun was above the horizon in the watch before and after mid-day watch. A number of canoes came again from the south-west, holding up a white shield as a signal of peace, and bartered grey furs for bits of cloth, and for milk soup. The bull belonging to the party happened to bellow, and the Skrælingers were terrified, and fled in their canoes. Gudrid, Karlsefne's wife, lay in here of a son, who was called Snorro. In the beginning of the following winter, the Skrælingers attacked them. They were defeated by the courage of Gudrid (who appears to have been far advanced in pregnancy at the time of this attack); but lost a man, and were so dispirited by the prospect of constant hostilities with the natives,



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that they resolved to return. They sailed east, and came to Straumfiord. Karlsefne then took one of the ships to look for Thorhall, while the rest remained behind. They proceeded northwards round Kialariness, and afterwards to the north-west, the land being to larboard of them, and covered with thick forests. They considered the hills they saw at Hope, and these, as one continuous range. They spent the third winter at Straumfiord. Karlsefne's son was now three years old. When they sailed from Vinland they had southerly winds, and came to Markland, where they met five Skrælingers, and took two boys, whom they taught Norse, and who told them their people had no houses, but lived in holes and caves: that they had kings; one called Avaldamon, and the other Valdida. Biorne Grimulfson was driven into the Irish Ocean, and came into waters so infested with worms that their ship was in a sinking state. Some of the crew were saved in the boat, which had been smeared over with seal-oil, which is a preventive against worms in wood. Karlsefne continued his voyage to Greenland, and arrived at Ericsfiord.

During the same summer, 1011, a ship from Norway came to Greenland. The vessel belonged to two brothers, Helge and Finboge, who wintered in Greenland. Freydisa (the natural daughter of Eric Red, who had married Thorward) proposed to them to join in an expedition to Vinland, each party to have thirty men, and to divide the gain equally. They agreed, and set out, and reached Leif's booths, where they spent the winter; but Freydisa, who had taken five men more with her than the agreement allowed, quarrelled with the brothers, and murdered them and the whole of their people, and returned in spring (1013) to Greenland.

Karlsefne went to Norway with his Vinland cargo next summer, and it was considered very valuable.

He sold even a piece of wood used for a door-bar, or a broomstick, to a Bremen merchant for half a mark of gold; for it was of massur-wood of Vinland. He returned, and purchased land in Iceland; and many people of distinction are descended from him and his son Snorro, who was born in Vinland. After his death his widow, Gudrid, went to Rome, and on her return lived in religious seclusion in Iceland.

The above is an abridgment of the eight chapters on which the whole accounts of Vinland rest, and which are given at length in the Appendix; and so much fanciful speculation has been reared upon this foundation, that it deserves examination. The main facts—the discovery of various lands to the south and west of Greenland, the repeated voyages to them, and the reasonable motives of such voyages—bear all the internal evidences of simple truth. We may generally believe in the truth of the accounts of men's actions, when we see reasonable and sufficient motives for them so to act. Iceland, although it had wood in those days, and has some still, produced only a scrubby small brushwood of birch or hazel, not fit for ship-building, nor for the large halls which it was the fashion of the age for great people to have for entertaining and lodging their followers in; and the state of society made it necessary for safety to keep large bodies of retainers always at hand, and about them. It is told as a remarkable thing in the Landnamma Book, or History of the Original Settlers in Iceland (page 29.), that Avang found such large wood where he settled, that he built a long-ship; and in the Kristni Saga it is mentioned that Hialte Skeggeson built a ship at home, so large that he sailed in it to Norway. In general, however, they had to buy their sea-going vessels in Norway. The drift wood found about the shores of Iceland in great abundance to a late period, and perhaps even now, would be too much shaken and



wormeaten to be fit for ship-building, even if it were of a sufficient size. To go in quest of the wooded countries to the south-west, from whence drift wood came to their shores, was a reasonable, intelligible motive, for making a voyage in search of the lands from whence it came, and where this valuable material could be got for nothing. So far we see reasonable motives followed by reasonable and perfectly credible acts and results. In the account, however, of the details upon which so much has been built up by modern antiquaries, we find no such consistency, credibility, or internal evidence of truthfulness. Leif and his successors, Karlsefne and others, arrive in Vinland in spring — say in May, June, or July. In what climate, or part of the world, are grapes to be found in those months? They can hardly tread on Straum Island — settled by our modern antiquaries to be Egg Island, at the mouth of Plymouth Sound in Massachusetts — for the eggs of eyder ducks. It was consequently early in spring, before birds were hatched, and before grapes have the shape of fruit in any climate, that they found ripe grapes and ears of wheat! Do vines, or wheat, or corn of any kind, grow spontaneously in those countries? This is a question by no means satisfactorily ascertained. Tyrker the German, who knew so well grapes and vines, “because he was born in a country in which these are not scarce,” comes back to his party after a short absence, rolling his eyes, making faces, talking German, and half drunk. All the grapes in Germany, and Vinland to boot, would not make a man drunk, without their juice undergoing the vinous fermentation. This is clearly the fiction of some saga-maker, who knew no more of wine than that it was the juice of the grape; and all the geographical speculations upon the sites and localities of the Vinland of the Northmen, built upon the natural products of the

land, fall to the ground. The eyder duck, on our side of the world, is very rarely seen in lower latitudes than  $60^{\circ}$ . It may be different on the American coast; but the Skrælingers, the sallow-complexioned people with skin-canoes with whom they bartered cloth and milk for sable and squirrel or grey skins, are, together with their articles of traffic, of northern origin. The red race of Indians could never have been called Skrælingers, and described as such,—viz. with broad cheeks, and sallow complexions,—by Northmen who knew the Skrælingers, or Esquimaux race, in Greenland. But we are told the Esquimaux race extended once much farther south, beyond Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and as far south as we please to have them. It is as easy to tell us that once the juice of the grape would intoxicate without the vinous fermentation,—that wheat would grow without being sown,—and that a barn, or more properly a kiln-barn, might be found in a land without dwelling-houses. All the geographical knowledge that can be drawn from the accounts of the natural products of Vinland in these eight chapters, points clearly to the Labrador coast, or Newfoundland, or some places north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The terror of the Skrælingers at the bellowing of Karlsefne's bull points rather to an island people, as the natives of Prince Edward's Island, or of Newfoundland; for a continental people in that part of America could not be strangers to the much more formidable bisson, or musk ox, or buffalo. The piece of massur-wood from Vinland, which Karlsefne sold to a Bremen merchant for half a mark of gold, must have derived its value either from its intrinsic worth or beauty as wood or dye-wood, or as a stick coming from a distant unknown land. In the latter case the kind or quality of the wood, and whether it grew south or north, were circumstances of no consequence to the buyer: it was a curiosity



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from an unknown land. In the former case, Karlsefne must be supposed to have gone to Honduras to cut his broomstick. The maple, or whatever wood for furniture grows more to the north in America, is not more beautiful than birch wood or other European wood. If it had been logwood, fustic, mahogany, that was meant by massur-wood, it would be a proof that the saga-writer was drawing upon his own imagination in the details of his account of Karlsefne; for vines and wheat growing spontaneously, mahogany trees or dye-woods, and Esquimaux in skin-canoes trading with sable skins and grey skins, and furs described to be white or all grey—"gravara ok salvali ok allskonar skinnavara," and "algra skinn"—never met in one locality: for the former are products of a very southern latitude, and the people and animals described belong to a northern climate. The account of the time from land to land in the voyages of Biorne, Leif, or Karlsefne, leads to no satisfactory result as to the land they came to; because we neither know their rate of sailing in a day, nor whether by a day's sailing they meant sailing day and night, or that they took down and stowed their great square-sail at night, and lay-to with a little try-sail aft till daylight, as similarly rigged vessels on the fishing banks do at the present day. The lying-to all night, as they were in an unknown sea, was the better seamanship, and we may suppose it was their way of sailing. In their ordinary voyages they appear always to have put up their tent-cloths at night, brought their vessel to the land or to an anchor, and to have gone to rest, leaving only a watch on deck. It is usually mentioned in the saga when they sail night and day, as a special circumstance. It does not appear probable they would run with all sail in the night through an unknown sea; and if they took down sail at night, and lay-to in the gulf stream, all con-

jecture founded on the number of days' sailing from Hellaland to Markland, or from Markland to Vinland, is quite arbitrary, and without guide. The description of the land is equally unsatisfactory as a means of discovering the localities in Vinland they visited, without more precise data. A country of stony soil, with little vegetation among the slaty fragments that cover it, applies to all the country from Hudson's Bay to Newfoundland; and Hellaland, so called from this circumstance, is a name that would suit any part of Labrador as well as Newfoundland. Markland, so called because low or level, and covered with thick forests, as a description may be applied to any part of America as well as to Nova Scotia. An island with a sound between it and the main, or a low shore with remarkably white sand cliffs and shallow water, a fiord or inlet of the sea, a river running out of a lake, a bay between two headlands, one of them of a conspicuous figure, are good landmarks for identifying a country of which the position is known, but are good for nothing as data for fixing that position itself; because these are features common to all sea coasts, and, on a small or great scale, to be found within every hundred miles of a run along the seaboard of a country. It is evident from the personal adventures ascribed by the saga-maker to the personages, that the details are imaginary, and only the general outline true. The revival of Thorstein Ericson's body, and its prophesying what was to befall Gudrid in her lifetime, are within the ordinary belief of those times, and therefore do not lessen the confidence in other circumstances related; nor the appearance to her alone of another Gudrid, who spoke Norse to her in Vinland, and whom nobody else saw. But the adventures of Freydisa, her murder of the two brothers, thirty men, and the women, is an improbable, not to say an impossible circumstance; as her thirty-



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five men had no motive for such a butchery of their comrades, in a country in which they needed all their strength for their safety, and for the objects of their voyage. All the details seem merely the filling up of imagination, to make a story of a main fact, the discovery of Vinland by certain personages, whose names, and the fact of their discovering unknown lands south-west of Greenland, are alone to be depended upon.

But two facts are stated by our modern antiquaries, which are held to be quite conclusive as to the locality in America discovered by the Icelanders. One is, that in the details of Leif's voyage and residence in Vinland, it is stated that on the shortest day the sun was above the horizon from half-past seven o'clock in the morning to half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, or nine hours, which gives the latitude of the place  $41^{\circ} 24' 10''$ , and which brings it to between Seaconnet Point in  $41^{\circ} 26'$ , and Judith Point in  $41^{\circ} 23'$ , and which two points form the entrance into Mount Hope Bay; which corresponds, even to the name Hop or Hope, with the description of a river, now called the Taunton, running from a lake into the sea, and with all the other landmarks or accounts of the appearance of the coast given in the saga. The other fact, not less striking, is, that in this very neighbourhood, — viz. at Assonet Point, on the shore of the river Taunton, in latitude  $41^{\circ} 44'$ , near the town of Berkley in the district of Massachusetts, — a stone covered with Runic inscriptions is still to be seen, and is known by the name of the Deighton Writing (written) Rock, and was an object of curiosity to the early English settlers as far back as 1680. These two happy coincidences are so happy — so like finding a box, and, 800 years afterwards, finding the key that of all the keys in the world can alone open it — that people almost doubt, at the first hearing of it, whether the news be not too

good to be true. The first question that arises to the doubting reader is, how, in Leif Ericson's time,—that is, about the year 1000, when Christianity was scarcely introduced, and church festivals, church time, and the knowledge and prayers of churchmen unknown,—did the Icelanders divide time? The whole circle of the horizon appears to have been divided by them into four quarters, each subdivided into two, making eight divisions, or attir (from which our old word airths, applied to the winds, seems derived); and these eight watches, each of three of our hours, made up the day, which we divide into 24 parts. It was not until 120 years after Leif's voyage, viz. in 1123, that Bishop Thorlak established in Iceland a code of church regulations or laws, by which time was more minutely ascertained for church prayers and observances. For all secular business, among a seafaring and labouring population, the division of time into eight watches was sufficiently minute for all their practical purposes. Now the saga says, "Sol havdi thar Eyktarstad ok Dagmalastad um skamdegi;" which clearly means that, on the shortest day, they had the sun in the watches called the Dagmalastad and the Eyktarstad; that the sun rose in the former, and set in the latter, and not as in Iceland, where the rising and setting were, on the shortest day, included in one watch. The Dagmalastad was the watch immediately before the mid-day watch (Middegi), and the Eyktarstad that immediately after. Now if we reckon from noon, the middle of the mid-day watch, it would begin at half-past ten o'clock of our time, and end at half-past one o'clock; Dagmalastad would begin at half-past seven, and end at half-past ten; and Eyktarstad begin at half-past one, and end at half-past four in the afternoon. Now if the sun rose any time within the Dagmalastad, and set any time within the Eyktarstad watch,—that is to say, any time between half-past

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seven and half-past ten for its rising, and any time between half-past one and half-past four of our time for its setting;—it would answer all the conditions of the text of the saga, which merely says they had the sun in these watches, not during the whole of these watches; and the precision of ideas and expression which characterises the Icelanders would undoubtedly have expressed, if that had been the meaning, that the sun rose at the beginning of Dagmalastad, and set at the end of Eyktarstad. Torfæus, certainly not inferior in judgment and knowledge to any antiquary of our times, and who, as a contemporary and friend, had on every doubtful point the opinion of Arne Magnæus, the first Icelandic antiquary who has ever appeared, makes out, from the same text, that the sun may be considered to have been above the horizon from the middle of Dagmalastad to the middle of Eyktarstadt,—that is, for about six hours,—which would correspond to a latitude of  $49^\circ$  instead of  $41^\circ$ ; and he, and Arne Magnæus we may presume with him, bring Vinland to some place in Newfoundland, or in the Saint Lawrence, which certainly would agree better with the description of the people and products, excepting the ready-made wine, the spontaneous wheat, and the fine wood, than Taunton river in Massachusetts. With regard to the Deighton Written Rock, upon which so much has been built in vast and expensive publications, such as the “*Antiquitates Americanæ*” (Hafniæ, 1837), and other works, the following observations may lead to a true estimate of its historical value. The rock or stone is a boulder or transported mass, not a stone belonging to the ground rock of the country. It is about  $11\frac{1}{2}$  feet long by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, running up to an edge, and the surface, or side on which the Runic inscription is found, sloping at an angle of  $60^\circ$  from its base. It is one of that class of detached masses of primary rock scattered over the

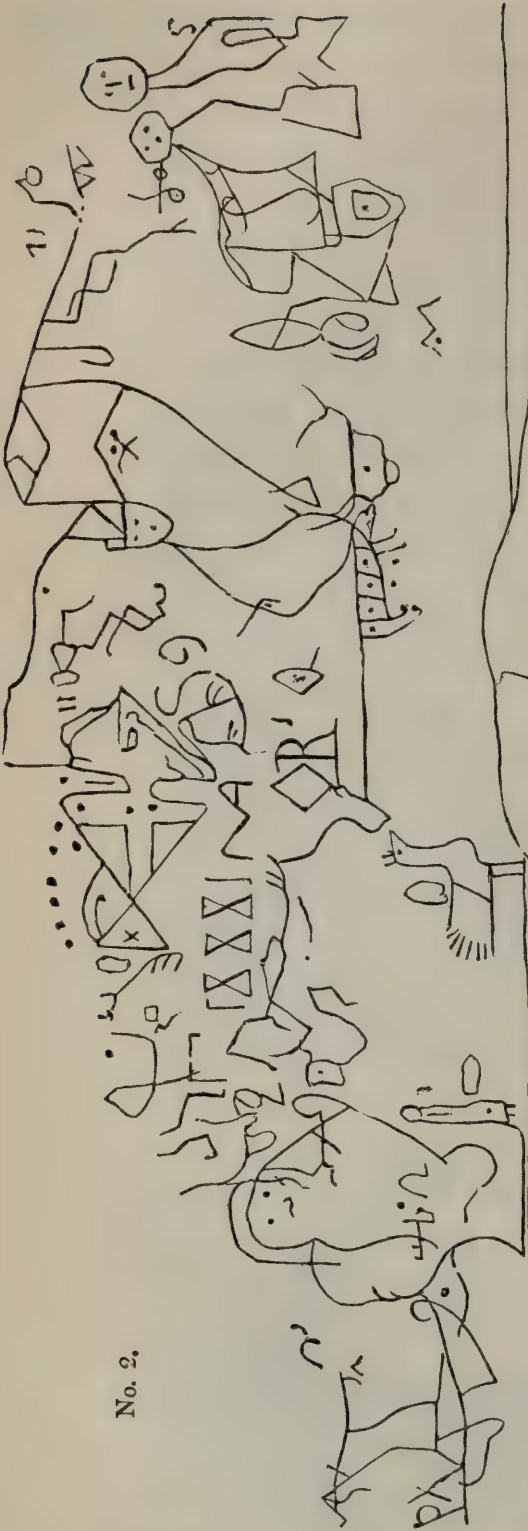
whole northern hemisphere of our globe—the evidences of some vast convulsion beyond human knowledge or conjecture. Whoever has examined this class of stones must have observed that it is almost a characteristic, distinguishing them from fixed ground rock of similar formation, that they are more interspersed with black or greenish veins or marks of a different substance from the component parts of the rock, and, in short, with lines which often assume the appearance of sea-weed or other fossil plant, enclosed in the crystallised matrix of the stone, but which are in reality small veins, or rather lines of chlorite. The Runic inscription at Runamoe, in Bleking in Sweden, which, from the days of Saxo Grammaticus to the present times, was considered to be an inscription of real but unintelligible letters on the ground rock, and which antiquaries but a few years ago supposed they had deciphered, and actually published their explanation of it, is now discovered, and admitted, to be nothing but veins of one substance interspersed in another. Chemistry settled the historical value of this Runic inscription. The Deighton Written Rock would perhaps be the better of a certificate from the mineralogist, as well as the antiquary. Supposing it beyond all doubt a stone with artificial characters, letters, or

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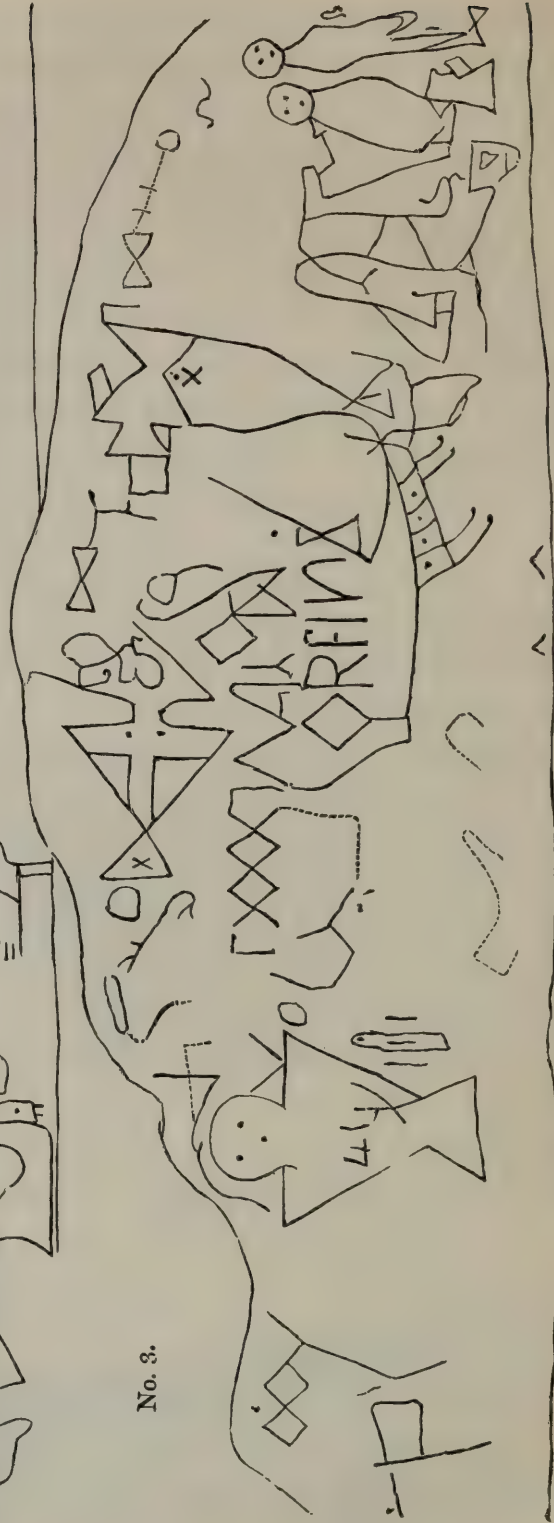




No. 2.



No. 3.



No. 2. — A copy of the inscription on the Deighton Stone, as given by Baylie and Goodwin in 1790.  
No. 3. — A copy of the same, as given by the American antiquaries in 1830.

figures inscribed upon it, the first question that occurs to every inquirer must be, what is there to prove that these marks are the work of the Northmen, and not of the natives, or of the first European settlers about the year 1620? The stone, of which No. 1. is a delineation (No. 2. is a copy of the marks or inscription in 1790, and No. 3. in 1830), bears nothing to show by whom, or when, the marks in question were scratched upon it. The native tribes of America, the Hottentots, even the natives of Australia, according to Captain Gray's narrative of his travels, have a propensity to delineate rude figures and marks upon the sides of caves and remarkable rocks, to indicate that they have been there, and even to show their tribe, numbers, and the direction they have taken. This stone is, by the description, quite tempting to indulge the propensity common to all men, savage or civilised, to leave some mark after them of their having existed; for it is said to be conspicuous from its position, flat surface, and different texture from the common rock of the country around.\* It is evident, on referring to

\* "The Deighton stone is a fine-grained greywakke, and the rock of the neighbourhood a large conglomerate. It is situated  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Taunton, on the Taunton river, a few feet from the shore, and is covered with water at flood tide, on the west side of Assonet Point, in the town of Berkley, county of Bristol, and state of Massachusetts, and in a parish or district called Deighton. The marks are described as 'showing no method in the arrangement of them.' The lines are from half an inch to an inch in width, and in depth sometimes one-third of an inch, though in general very superficial. They were, inferring from the rounded elevations and intervening depressions, pecked in upon the rock, and not chiselled or smoothly cut out." — (*Communication of the Rhode Island Historical Society to the Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen, 1830.*) Other rocks, similarly marked with rude hieroglyphics, or figures of animals, are found in various parts of the interior of America, far from the coast, — as on the Alleghany river, the Connecticut river, about Lake Erie, on Cumberland river, about Rock-castle Creek, — and similar, as sculptured work, to the Deighton stone. Are these too memorials of Thorfinn Karlsefne, left in Vinland by his party of woodcutters? or are they the rude memorials of the wandering Indians, left, if they have a meaning, to show those of their own tribe who may follow that they have been on the spot some time before?



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No. 2. and No. 3., that there is no sequence of letters, either Runic or Roman, upon the Deighton Written Rock, but only detached unconnected marks, belonging to any people or period one may please to fancy. What is there to prove that these are not the scratches of some idle sailor boy, or of some master Deighton of the first settlers in 1620? Every Runic inscription given by Olaus Wormius, in his "Literatura Runica," is in regular columns of letters from right to left, or from top to bottom, or going round the stone; but still in regular rows, letter after letter. Here all the scratches are detached marks, such as a child would make on the smooth side of a stone, without meaning. The only semblance to letters is in the middle of the stone, in which antiquaries discover the name of Thorfinn,—viz. Thorfinn Karlsefne, the leader of the expedition. In the older copy (No. 2. of the inscription) we see a lozenge-shaped mark, a Roman letter R, a stroke, and a triangular mark. In the later copy of 1830 (No. 3.), the lozenge has got a tail to it, and the Roman letters RFIN are distinct. The first copy was taken in 1790, by Dr. Baylie and Mr. Godwin; the latter in 1830, by the Rhode Island Historical Society. Both copies coincide; except that the figure of a cock, and of some animal apparently, and some unintelligible marks delineated in the older, have in the course of forty years become obliterated, and are not given in the later copy. But by some strange process, although it is one not at all uncommon in stones that have attracted the antiquary's notice, the thing sought for—the letters of the word Thorfinn—has in the course of the forty years gained wonderfully in distinctness, instead of becoming obliterated or less legible. Let any one look at the upper copy (No. 2.), and make out, if he can, any thing approaching to the word Thorfinn, except a lozenge and R, such as one may see on a box or package in

a ship's cargo; but let him look at No. 3.—the copy taken since the Icelandic origin of the inscription was broached,—and there to be sure he will see without spectacles a lozenge with a tail, and the Roman letters FINZ, making Thorfinz. In the tables of the various forms of Runic letters given by Wormius, in his “*Literatura Runica*,” there is no such lozenge-shaped letter to express Th or Tho; but as in many districts Runic letters appear to have had different shapes from those used in other parts, this circumstance is of little importance. The letter R may have been common to both alphabets, the Roman and Runic: the letters FIN are decidedly Roman; so that in this Runic inscription there is but one letter that may possibly be Runic, if it be a letter at all, and the rest are all Roman characters. In both copies, just over the lozenge letter, is a mark, also in Roman characters, which may be NA, or MA; the letter A being formed by the last branch of the M. Either will do; because, if it be NA, it may be part of the word Landnam; and if it be MA, it will surely be part of the word Madr: and Landnammadr signifies the first settler of a country,—the *origines gentis*,—and is so used to denote the original settlers in Iceland, of whom the Landnamma Saga treats. Close to this NA, in both copies, are marks of three tens and a one, in Roman numerals, viz. XXXI.; and before the first is something like a Greek gamma, but which may possibly be intended for a Roman C. Now if this Roman C be intended for a hundred, it would not be for a Roman hundred or centum of five score, but a long hundred of six score, by which the Icelanders always counted; and CXXXI. would in reality mean 151, not 131. Now, Karlsefne had lost nine of his original party, who had gone northwards under Thorhall; and this number 9 added to the 151 so clearly and satisfactorily made out on the stone, just



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makes up the 160 men, the original number of Landnammen of Vinland who embarked with Karlsefne. It would be puerile to dwell on such puerilities. To believe that Thorfinn Karlsefne, or any of his party, was acquainted not only with the Runic and Roman letters, but with the Roman numerals, yet without knowing the use of those numerals, and the number of units they express; and should leave a Runic inscription, as it is called, without a Runic letter in it, and so rude as to show—if the marks are letters at all, and not merely scratches, marks, or initials, made at various times by various hands—a complete ignorance of the collocation of letters in a row so as to form words, and a complete ignorance of the value of the Roman numerals he was using,—would require the antiquarian credulity of a Jonathan Oldbuck.

The northern antiquaries are misled in their speculations about Vinland by the singular case of the ancient Greenland colony. By the rarest coincidence of new and old colonisation, a kind of double evidence has come out to prove the veracity of the saga accounts of that old Icelandic colony. First is the documentary evidence of the saga, bearing no inconsistency or internal evidence of deviation from truth, and supported by collateral documentary evidence, from Adam of Bremen and other writers of the 11th and 12th centuries incidentally mentioning Greenland and its bishops, and which is evidence precisely similar in kind to the documentary evidence relative to Vinland. But a second mass and kind of evidence substantiating the first has come out in our times, by the discovery in Greenland of remains of buildings, churches, and of inscriptions and other material proofs, corroborating the documentary proofs of the existence and state of this ancient colony in Greenland given in the sagas. Our modern antiquaries want to substantiate the documentary evidence of the saga relative to Vinland

by a similar kind of material evidence to be discovered in America, without considering that the cases are totally distinct and different. °Greenland was a colony with communications, trade, civil and ecclesiastical establishments, and a considerable population, for 300 years at least before it was lost sight of. Vinland was only visited by flying parties of wood-cutters, remaining at the utmost two or three winters, but never settling there permanently as colonists, nor as far as can be seen from the sagas, with any intention of settling. No division and occupation of the land, no agricultural preparations are mentioned. Cattle they would have taken for milk, or food probably, at any rate, as salt to preserve meat must have been scarce in Greenland, where it could only be obtained by evaporating sea-water. Cattle taken with them, if the circumstance be true, are the only indication of any intention to settle; and a settlement or colony was not established. Three winters are the longest period any of these wood-cutting parties staid in Vinland. To expect here, as in Greenland, material proofs to corroborate the documentary proofs, is weakening the latter by linking them to a sort of evidence which, from the very nature of the case, — the temporary visits of a ship's crew, — cannot exist in Vinland, and, as in the case of Greenland, come in to support them. It would be quite as judicious and consistent with sound principle of investigation to go to New Zealand, or the Sandwich Isles, to search for material proofs (old shoes, cocked hats, or pen-knives) of Captain Cook's having visited those places, and to link the documentary proofs of his discoveries to the authenticity of the material proofs — of the old shoes, cocked hats, and pen-knives — left by him on those shores. This is precisely the kind of investigation and reasoning, with regard to the discovery of Vinland by the Northmen, which antiquaries are pursuing; and to be sure it



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does lead them into laughable discoveries—quite as ridiculous as that of the Runic inscription on the Deighton Writing Stone, or as Oldbuck's Roman Prætorium on the Kaim of Kinprunes. Here is another specimen of the development of the imaginative faculty among antiquaries.

In the town of Newport, near to the south end of Rhode Island, stands the circular stone-work of an old windmill, of about 18 feet in diameter within walls, and raised upon eight pillars of about 7 feet high and 5 to 6 feet apart, arched over so as to admit carts to come under the floor of the mill, and the corn-sacks to be hoisted up or lowered down through a hatch in the wooden floor above. This is the ordinary plan in large well-arranged windmills, as it takes the horses and carts out of the way of the wings of the mill, and of the lever on the ground by which the moveable wooden superstructure or head of the mill was formerly turned to the wind. The pillars supported the beams of the floor; and windows and a fireplace, corresponding to the floor or platform of the mill, are in the wall, which is about 24 feet high, built of rough stone very substantially, and with lime-mortar, and has been harled or roughcast with lime. The situation is at the summit, or nearly so, of the principal eminence in the neighbourhood, open to the sea breezes, and with no out-walls or any thing near it to intercept the wind. It is universally called by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood "the old stone mill." These are pretty good proofs that the building has been a mill; but there is also documentary proof of it. Rhode Island was first settled by the English in 1636, and two years afterwards (1638) Newport and the south end were occupied. In 1678, that is forty years afterwards, Benedict Arnold, who appears to have been governor of the settlement at one time, in his last will and testament calls this very building his

stone mill. This is not all. One of the first settlers, a Mr. Peter Easton, had the laudable custom of marking in his pocket-book whatever notable event occurred in his township; and under the year 1663 he makes the memorandum, "This year we built the first windmill." Now we have here, first, the documentary evidence of Governor Arnold's will, calling it, in 1678, his stone mill, and bequeathing it as such; and of Mr. Peter Easton's pocket-book, giving posterity the information that "the first windmill in the township was built in 1663;" and as they could scarcely have required two mills at once if they had none before, we may fairly presume that the mill built in 1663 was that bequeathed in 1678. And, secondly, we have the material proof of the building, with its modern walls, built with mortar of lime and sand, and harled, and with a chimney-place, windows, and beam supports for a mill platform or floor, being altogether fit for and on the plan of a mill, and of nothing else, and its situation also being adapted for that purpose; and the only name given to it by the neighbouring inhabitants being "the old stone mill." Don Quixote himself could not have resisted such evidence of this having been a windmill. But those sly rogues of Americans dearly love a quiet hoax. With all gravity they address a solemn communication to the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen, respecting these interesting remains of "a structure bearing an antique appearance"—"a building possibly of the ante-Columbian times"—"a relic, it may be, of the Northmen, the first discoverers of Vinland!" After describing the situation of the mill, they go on to say, that this "dilapidated structure" has long attracted the attention of the numerous strangers who come in the fine season, from all parts of the Union, to enjoy the sea-bathing and pure air of Newport, and they often question the inhabitants concerning its



origin; but the only answer they receive is, that it has always been known by the name of "the old stone mill." It has excited the most lively interest among the learned in those parts, and many conjectures have been hazarded about its origin and object; but these, say the wags, with great solemnity of phrase, "are shrouded with mystery;" and all that can be learned from the inhabitants is, that as long as people can remember it has been called "the old stone mill." But whether this structure could have been built for a mill, although no doubt it is so well adapted for a mill that it may have been used for such purpose at some period, is matter of grave doubt to many; because no similar building, of old or new date, for any purpose, exists in the neighbourhood, or in all the country. They send, along with their communication concerning this interesting structure of the original Scandinavian discoverers of Vinland in the 11th century, drawings of the exterior and interior, a ground plan and an elevation of the old stone mill; all which they submit to the consideration of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen. It must be allowed that these Rhode Island wags have played off their joke with admirable dexterity. They conceal nothing that fixes the building to have been beyond all doubt a mill; neither the name it has always gone by,—nor its windmill plan and site,—nor its modern walls built with lime and sand, and roughcast,—nor General Arnold's will calling it his stone mill,—nor Mr. Peter Easton's memorandum of the year in which it was built; but they cunningly keep all these circumstances in the background, and bring to the front "the dilapidated structure,"—"the wonder of strangers from all parts of the United States,"—"the structure bearing an antique appearance,"—its origin and use "shrouded with mystery,"—"but possibly ante-Columbian,"—"a remain, possibly, of the Scandi-

navian discoverers of Vinland in the 11th century." The bait took; and no doubt these comical fellows at Newport are chuckling in their club-room at seeing their "old stone mill" figuring in the Annals of the Northern Antiquarian Society, with arches and pillars like a Grecian temple. It is only when one comes, compass in hand, to a scale of feet and inches, that one finds this magnificent structure, with pillars and arches, and of which an exterior and interior view is given in the Annals of the Antiquarian Society of Copenhagen, is in reality the bottom of a mill of the very ordinary size of 18 feet within walls, standing on pillars 6 or 7 feet high and 5 or 6 feet apart, and arched over, — like to and on the scale of the pillars and arches of a cart-shed, or a horse-course of a thrashing-mill, instead of a structure, as the plates, of which no less than three are given, would lead you to believe, on the plan of the Coliseum, and of the size of the Temple of Vesta. This is very amusing; but it is not quite so amusing to have to pay heavy prices for magnificent books, got up in two or three languages, superb in size, paper, and type, decorated with fac-simile specimens of the writing of illuminated beautifully executed saga manuscripts, illustrated with splendid copper-plates, and published in the name and under the auspices of a great and learned antiquarian society; and to find you have been paying gold for such oldwifery as this Deighton writing rock and Newport old stone mill. It would, in fact, be difficult to point out any fact or observation of value relative to the discovery of Vinland which has not been brought to light and weighed by Torfæus, in 1707, in his little tract on Vinland. Torfæus was an antiquary of great judgment. He came first into the field, and seized upon the only fact with respect to the discovery of Vinland that there was to seize upon — the documentary proof, from a manuscript of fixed date, of a



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discovery of Vinland, recorded in writing a hundred years before Columbus's first voyage; and that record known to Columbus, or Columbus in a situation to know of it, a few years before he undertook that voyage. Torfæus left nothing behind to glean with respect to Vinland of any value in the question of the discovery of America by the Northmen.

The legend of Gunleif Gunlaugsson, like this saga of Karlsefne, gives a discovery not unlikely to have taken place, and much more to the south; but with adventures which border on the incredible. It is contained in the Eyrbyggja Saga. Towards the end of King Olaf the Saint's time, about 1030, Gunleif, on his voyage westward from Iceland to Ireland, was overtaken by a heavy storm from east and north-east, which drove him far out to sea to the south-west, so that none of them knew where they were. After driving about the greater part of the summer they came to land; but were seized by the natives, who came in crowds to the vessel, and spoke a language they did not understand, but it appeared to them like Irish. They observed that the natives were disputing whether to make slaves of them or put them to death. In the meantime an old grand-looking man, with white hair, came riding along, and all the natives received him with the greatest respect. He accosted the Icelanders in the Norse tongue, and asked them if Snorro the Godar (one of the most important personages in Iceland) was alive still, and his sister Thuride. He would not tell his name, and forbade his countrymen to come there again, as the people were fierce, and attacked strangers, and the country had no good harbours. He gave them a gold ring to deliver to Thuride, whom, he said, he liked better than her brother Snorro, and a sword for Thuride's son. Gunleif brought these things home, and people concluded that the man must have been Biorn Breid-

vikingskappe, a scald, who was much respected, and who had fallen in love with Thuride, on which account her husband and her brother had persecuted him, and he had left Iceland in a vessel about the year 998, and had never afterwards been heard of: "and this is the only truth known concerning Biorn." This saga is supposed to have been written or composed in the beginning of the 13th century; as it mentions one Gudney telling him the saga-writer, of taking up and interring in a church the bones of some of Snorro the Godar's predecessors, and this Gudney is known to have died about 1220. The legend has a value independent of the truth or falsity of the details. These are at least improbable. The man could have no object in concealing his name, which the tokens he was sending to Iceland would at once reveal, and no intelligible motive for not returning with his countrymen. But it is valuable, because, whatever may be the truth of the filling up, or even of the main event of a vessel being driven to an unknown land, it shows an existing rumour or idea among seafaring men, long before Columbus's discoveries, that a north-east wind would bring a vessel sailing from Iceland to Ireland to a new land on the south-west, if she ran before it; and not into an uninhabitable region of fire, as the Romans appear to have conceived of the world. Some obscure knowledge of a western land must have been circulating as a foundation for this legend. The White Man's Land, the Great Ireland, a country in the west peopled by Christians originally of Ireland, has the same kind of value of showing that men, either from the reason in the supposition, which is the most likely, or from some actual chance discovery, had come to the conclusion that there was land in the west opposite the shores of Europe; and it also has the same kind of worthlessness as the other two legends—that the details are evidently fictitious and improbable.



## MEMOIR OF SNORRO STURLESON.

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SNORRO STURLESON was born in the year 1178, at Hvam, in the present bailiwick of Dale, in the western province of Iceland. His father, Sturla Thordarson, was a man of consequence, descended from the royal stock of Odin to which the Northern kings, and all the great families among the Northmen, traced their lineage; and he held by hereditary right the dignity of a Godar, which in the times of the Odin worship was hereditary in certain families descended from the twelve Diars, Drottars, or Godars, who accompanied Odin from Asagard. The office of Godar appears to have combined the functions of priest and judge originally; and long after the sacerdotal function had ceased the judicial remained, and was exercised as an hereditary jurisdiction over the locality or godard, even long after the establishment of Christianity. Snorro was sent in his infancy to John Loptson, of Odda, to be fostered. It was the custom of the age for people of consequence to send their children to be fostered by others, sometimes of higher and sometimes of lower station; but always of a station, connection, or influence that would be of use afterwards to the foster-child. This fostering was not merely nursing the child until he was weaned, but implied bringing him up to the age of manhood; and the ties of foster-father, foster-son, and foster-brother, appear to have been as strong and influential as the natural ties of blood relationship. The custom has arisen in turbulent times, from the policy of not giving an opportunity to hereditary enemies to cut off an entire family at one swoop, leaving no heir and avenger,

and of strengthening the family by collateral alliances through the new ties. We read of many instances of the kings sending their infants to influential bonders to be fostered; by which, no doubt, a great local interest and connection was secured to the foster-child. In the social state of those ages each family was a distinct dynasty, beholden for its security to its own strength in friends and followers, and its own power to avenge its wrongs, rather than to the guardianship and force of law. The system of fosterage was a consequence of this social state; and the custom lingered in England for a long time in the form of sending children to be brought up as pages in the families of distinguished personages. John Loptson appears to have been a person of more distinction than Snorro's own father. His grandfather was Sæmund hinn Frode, the contemporary of Are who first committed the historical sagas to writing; and Sæmund himself was the compiler of the older Edda. John Loptson's mother, Thora, was an illegitimate daughter of King Magnus Barefoot. In such a family, we may presume the literature of the country would be cultivated, and the sagas of the historical events in Norway, and of the transactions of her race of kings, would be studied with great interest.

One would like to know how people of distinction in that age lived and were lodged in Iceland? What kind of house and housekeeping the daughter of a king would have there? We have no positive data to judge from; but we may infer from various circumstances that this class would be at least as well off as in Norway; that comparatively the comforts, luxuries, and splendour of life in the poor countries, would not be so much inferior to those of the rich countries as in our own days. Sugar, coffee, tea, silks, cotton, and all foreign articles, were almost equally out of reach and enjoyment in all the countries of the North.



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From the natural products, or crops of the land, all that was enjoyed had to be obtained. Iceland enjoyed the advantage of more security of property and person ; and the natural products of Iceland, — fish, oil, skins, butter, wool, and before the introduction of cotton as a clothing material, the wadmál, or coarse woollen cloth manufactured in Iceland, in which rent and taxes were paid, and which circulated as money through all the North, and in which even other goods were valued as a medium of exchange, — would all be of much higher comparative value than in after ages, when commerce and manufactures gave people a greater supply of better and cheaper articles for the same uses. The market for wood of Norway being confined to such islands as produced none for building purposes, the houses would probably be much the same in size and conveniences as those common among all classes in Norway, and little more expensive. The trade of bartering their products for those of other countries would probably be much more extensive than now, because their kind of products were much more generally used in other countries. In Drontheim, Bergen, and Tunsberg, several merchant vessels at the same time are often spoken of in the sagas ; and Torfæus, in his “*Vinlandia*,” page 69., mentions a Hrafnus Limiricepeta, so called from his frequent voyages to Limeric in Ireland — a Limeric trader, — who had related to Thorfinn, Earl of Orkney, some accounts of a Great Ireland in the Western Ocean. In the *Færeyinga Saga*, we read of merchants frequenting the Feroe Isles to purchase the products of the country, and of the people sending off cargoes of their wool to Norway. The commercial intercourse of those times has probably been greater than we suppose, although dealings were only in the rude products of one land bartered against those of another. Matthew Paris tells us of his being at Bergen

in the year 1248, and of there being more than 200 vessels in that port at the same time. The poorer lands and countries of Europe, and the employment of their inhabitants, have in fact undergone a great depreciation in value, and which is still going on, by the introduction and general diffusion of better articles for food, clothing, and enjoyment, from better climes, and by the diffusion of more refined tastes and habits than the products of their soil and industry can gratify. When wadmal, or coarse woollen cloth, was the ordinary wear; stock-fish, or salt fish, in great use even in royal households; fish oil the only means in the North for lighting rooms,—the poorest countries, such as Iceland, Greenland, or the north of Norway, which produced these, must have been much more on a par with better countries, such as Denmark or England, which did not produce them, and must have been comparatively much better to live in, and the inhabitants nearer to the general condition of the people of other countries, than they are now. The daughter of King Magnus Barefoot would probably be as well lodged, fed, clothed, and attended, as she would have been in Scotland in that age.

John Loptson died when Snorro was nineteen years of age. Snorro continued to live with his foster-brothers, his own father being dead, and his patrimony inconsiderable and much wasted by his mother. At twenty-one years of age he married Herdisa, the daughter of a wealthy priest called Berse, who lived at Berg, in the bailiwick of Myre, where he also took up his abode. He got a considerable fortune with his wife\*, by whom he had several children, but only two who grew up; a son called John Murt, and a daughter called Halbera. He had also several illegitimate chil-

\* Four thousand dollars it is reckoned to have been by antiquaries—a large fortune before silver became plentiful by the discovery of America.



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dren ; a son called Urækia, and a daughter called Ingeborg. After being twenty-five years married to Herdisa, he married, sometime about 1224, she being still alive, another wife, Halveig, a rich widow, with whom he got also a large fortune. He quarrelled with the children of his first wife about their fortunes to which they were entitled when he parted from their mother. He was in enmity also with the husbands of both his daughters, each of whom had been divorced, or had had two husbands ; and these sons-in-law, and his own brother Sighvat, were the parties who finally murdered him in their family feud. What is known of Snorro Sturleson is derived from an account of the Sturle family, called the “Sturlunga Saga,” composed evidently by one of the descendants of the kinsmen with whom he had been in enmity. His bad actions are probably exaggerated, and his good concealed. With every allowance, however, for the false colouring which hatred and envy may have given to the picture, Snorro appears from it to have been a man of violent disposition,—greedy, selfish, ambitious, and under no restraint of principle in gratifying his avarice and evil passions. He is accused of amassing great wealth by unjust litigation with his nearest kindred, and by retaining unjustly the property which of right belonged to them on his parting with his first wife ; and of appearing at the Things with an armed body of 600 or 800 men, and obtaining by force the legal decisions he desired. He is accused also of having, on his visits to Norway, betrayed the independence of his country, and contributed to reduce Iceland to the state of a province of Norway. It is probable that much of the vices of the age, and of the inevitable events in history prepared by causes of remote origin, is heaped up by the saga-writer on Snorro’s head. He was clearly guilty of the two greatest charges which, in a poor country and ig-

norant age, can be brought against a man — he was comparatively rich, and comparatively learned. Of his wealth we are told that he possessed six considerable farms, on which his stock of cattle was so great that in one year, in which fodder was scarce, he lost 120 head of oxen, without being seriously affected by it in his circumstances. He employed much of his wealth in improving and fortifying his main residence at Reikholt, to which he had removed from Berg. At Reikholt he constructed a bathing room of cut freestone, into which the water from a warm spring in the neighbourhood was conducted by a covered drain or pipe. Stone buildings in the North being rare, this structure was considered magnificent, and is spoken of as a proof at once of Snorro's wealth and extravagance. In this age it will rather be considered a proof that Snorro was a man of habits far more refined than those of the people around him; that, trifling as the structure may have been, it shows a mind of great energy and activity to have executed it, and of some refinement and improved habits to have felt the want of accommodations for personal cleanliness in his house. Snorro's first journey to Norway appears to have been about the year 1221, when he was forty-three years of age, and was still married to his first wife Herdisa. He appears to have come to Norway on a visit to Earl Hakon Galin, who was married to Lady Christina, the daughter of King Sigurd the Crusader. We are told in the Sturlunga Saga, that Snorro had composed a poem in honour of the earl, who in return had sent him a sword and a suit of armour. On his arrival he found that the earl was dead, and his widow was married again to Askel, the Lagman of Gotland. He remained the first winter at the court of King Hakon and Earl Skule, who then ruled over Norway, and proceeded in summer to visit Lady Christina, by whom he was



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well received ; and it may be supposed that on this journey he collected the information relative to former transactions in Sweden and Denmark, as well as in Norway, that he gives in his Chronicle. The Lady Christina was a daughter of King Sigurd the Crusader, by Malmfrid, a daughter of King Harald of Novogorod, whose mother was Gyde, a daughter of the English King Harald, the son of Earl Godwin, who fell at the battle of Hastings. This Lady Christina appears to have been married first to Erling Skakke, by whom she had a son, who was king of Norway, Magnus Erlingsson, in the middle of whose reign Snorro's Chronicle ends. She was then married to Earl Hakon Galin, after whom she married the Lagman Askel. On his return from this visit Snorro remained two years with Earl Skule in Norway. It is evident that, as a chronicler, Snorro Sturleson had thus enjoyed opportunities of collecting or correcting the accounts of transactions of former times, which few contemporary writers possessed. He was made a cup-bearer, or dish-bearer, equivalent to the modern dignity of chamberlain, by King Hakon ; and is accused by his enemies of having entered into a private agreement with the king and Earl Skule that he should use his influence to subvert the independence which Iceland had hitherto enjoyed, and to persuade the Thing to submit to the government of the King of Norway ; and that he should be made the king's lenderman, or even earl over the country, in reward of this service. Whatever may have been Snorro Sturleson's ambition or want of principle, no grounds for this charge appear in his life. The subjection of Iceland to the crown of Norway was, on the contrary, carried into effect two years after his murder by his personal enemies ; and the event may rather be considered the inevitable result of the changes which had taken place in the social condition, military spirit, and arrange-

ments and relative importance of different countries, about the middle of the 13th century, than the consequence of any conspiracy or treachery. Snorro returned to Reikholt, and, divorcing his first wife, married his second wife, for the sake, it is alleged, of her large fortune, and became the richest, and probably the most unhappy man of his day, in Iceland. He was involved in disputes and lawsuits with his sons and his wife's family, who appear to have had just and legal claims to their shares of the properties which he continued to keep in his own possession. He appears to have visited Norway once, if not twice again, before or about the year 1237, and to have attached himself to the party of Duke Skule, who had claims on the succession to the crown of Norway. In 1237, Snorro returned to Iceland, and Duke Skule assumed the title of king at Drontheim, in opposition to his son-in-law, King Hakon Hakonson; but in the following year he and his son were slain. Snorro Sturleson, as a friend or adherent of Duke Skule, was declared a traitor by King Hakon. As the king's chamberlain, he might in that age, although not a Norwegian subject, be considered a traitor. Letters from the king were issued to his enemies to bring him prisoner to Norway, or to put him to death; and on this authority his relations, with whom he was in enmity in a family feud,—his three sons-in-law, Gissur, Kolbein, and Arne, — came by night, in September 1241, to his residence at Reikholt, and murdered him in the 63rd year of his age. The same party, two years afterwards, brought Iceland under subjection to the crown of Norway. It seems unjust to throw upon the memory of Snorro Sturleson, as far as the circumstances can be made out, the imputation of having sought to betray the independence of his country, when no overt act of his appears to have tended to that result, and when his enemies, who



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assassinated him, and from whom alone any account of his life proceeds, were avowedly the parties who brought it about. But it cannot be denied that their accounts, and even their enmity, prove that Snorro has been a man unjust to and hated by his family, — selfish, rapacious, and without restraint from principle or natural affection.

The judgment for posterity to come to probably is, that Snorro Sturleson, and even his relations who murdered him, were rather a type of the age in which they lived, than individuals particularly prominent for wickedness in that age. The moral influences of Christianity had not yet taken root among the Northmen, while the rude virtues of their barbarous pagan forefathers were extinct. The island of Iceland had never contained above sixty-three or sixty-four thousand inhabitants — the population of an ordinary town. The providing of food, fuel, and of winter provender for their cattle, and such employments, have necessarily at all times occupied a much greater proportion of the population than in more favoured climes. The enterprising, energetic, and restless spirits found occupation abroad in the roving viking expeditions of the Norwegians, for the Icelanders themselves fitted out no viking expeditions; while the equally ambitious, but more peaceful and cultivated, appear to have acquired property and honour, as scalds, in no inconsiderable number. But the rise of the Hanseatic League, and the advance of the south and west of Europe in civilisation, trade, and naval power, had extinguished the vikings on the sea. They were no longer, in public estimation, exercising an allowable or honourable profession; but were treated as common robbers, and punished. The diffusion of Christianity, and of a lettered clergy over the Scandinavian peninsula, had in the same age superseded the scalds, even as recorders of law or history. The scald, with his

saga and his traditional verses, gave way at once before the clerk, with his paper, pen, and ink. Both occupations — that of the viking and of the scald — fell as it were at once, and in one generation, — in the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th century; and the wild, unquiet, ambitious spirits, in the small Icelandic population, which were formerly absorbed by them, were thrown back into their native island, and there, like tigers shut up together in a den, they preyed on or worried each other. In Scandinavia itself the same causes produced in that age the same effects. The Birkebeiners and the Baglers, who, from the middle of Magnus Erlingsson's reign, raised their leaders alternately to the Norwegian crown, were in reality the vikings, driven from the seas to the forests, — were the daring, the idle, the active of society, who could find no living or employment in the ordinary occupations of husbandry, which were preoccupied by the ordinary agricultural population, nor in the few branches of manufacture or commerce then exercised as means of subsistence; and whose former occupations of piracy at sea, or marauding expeditions on land under foreign vikings, was cut off by the progress of Christian influences on conduct, — of the power of law, and of the naval, military, and commercial arrangements in all other countries. The employments and means of living peaceably were not increased so rapidly, as the employment given by private warfare on sea and land had been put down; and in all Europe there was an overpopulation, in proportion to the means of earning a peaceful livelihood, which produced the most dreadful disorders in society. This was probably the main cause of the unquiet, unsettled state of every country, from the 11th century to the 15th. The Crusades even appear to have been fed not more by fanaticism, than by this want of employment at home in every country. Law and social order were begin-



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ning to prevail, and to put down private wars, and the claim of every petty baron to garrison his robber nest and pillage the weak; but this growing security had not advanced so far that trade and manufacture could absorb, and give a living to, the men not wanted in agricultural and thrown out of military employment. It takes a long time, apparently, before those tastes and habits of a nation on which manufactures and commerce are founded, can be raised. Society was in a transition state. The countries which took but little part in the Crusades, — such as Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and this little population of Iceland, — and which had no outlet for the unquiet spirits reared in private wars or piracy, present a deplorable state of society for many generations. A bad, unquiet, cut-throat spirit, was transmitted to succeeding generations, and kept those countries in a half-barbarous state to a much later period than the other countries which had got rid of a prior turbulent generation in the Crusades. The Sturlunga Saga, or account of Snorro and his family, contains little else but a recital of private feuds in Iceland, — of murders, burning of houses, treachery, and a social disorganisation among this handful of people, which might well excuse Snorro Sturleson if he had wished and attempted to obtain the common benefit of all social union — the security of life and property — by the surrender of a nominal independence, but a real anarchy, into the hands of a government strong enough to make laws respected.

Snorro Sturleson must be measured, not by our scale of moral and social worth, but by the scale of his own times. Measured by that scale, he will be judged to have been a man of great but rough energy of mind, — of strong selfishness, rapacity, and passions unrestrained by any moral, religious, or social consideration, — a bold, bad, unprincipled man, of intel-

lectual powers and cultivation far above any of his contemporaries whose literary productions have reached us,—a specimen of the best and worst in the characters of men in that transition-age from barbarism to civilisation,—a type of the times,—a man rough, wild, vigorous in thought and deed, like the men he describes in his Chronicle.

How, it may fairly be asked, could a work of such literary merit as the translator claims for Snorro Sturleson's Chronicle, have lain hid so long from English readers, and have been valued, even on the Continent, only by a few antiquaries in search of small facts connected with Danish history? The Heimskringla has been hardly used by the learned men of the period in which it was first published. It appeared first in the literary world in 1697, frozen into the Latin of the Swedish antiquary Peringskiöld. A Swedish translation, indeed, as well as a Latin, accompanied the Icelandic text; but the Swedish language was then, and is now, scarcely more known than the Icelandic in the fields of European literature. Modern Latin, or Latin applied to subjects beyond its own classical range, is a very imperfect medium for conveying realities to the mind, and, like algebra, presents only equivalents for things or words,—not the living words and impressions themselves. It may be an advantage in science, law, metaphysics, to work with the dead terms of a dead fixed language; but in all that addresses itself to the fancy, taste, or sympathy of men, the dead languages are dead indeed, and do not convey ideas vividly to the mind like the words of a living tongue belonging to existing realities. Conceive Shakspeare translated into Latin, or Schiller, or Sir Walter Scott! Would the scholar the most versed in that language have the slightest idea of those authors, or of their merits? About the time also when Peringskiöld published the Heimskringla,



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antiquarian research was, and still continues to be, the principal literary occupation of the educated classes in Sweden and Denmark, and that which led, more than any other branch of literature, to distinction and substantial reward from government. Peringskiöld, Torfæus, Arne Magnusen, Schöning, and many other antiquaries of great learning, research, and talent in their own antiquarian pursuits, dug for celebrity in this mine of the Heimskringla, and generally threw away the sterling ore to bring home the worthless pebble. Dates were determined, localities ascertained, royal genealogies put to rights, — the ancestor of the Danish dynasty proved, to the satisfaction of all men, to have been a descendant of Odin called Skiöld, and not Dan, — and a great deal of such learned dust was raised, swept into a heap, and valued as dust of gold; but the historical interest, the social condition, the political institutions of the Northmen, as delineated in the Heimskringla, were not laid before the public by those great antiquaries: and possibly these were subjects of which they could not safely treat. These profound scholars, so laboriously and successfully occupied, appear to have forgotten altogether, in their zeal to do each other justice, and amidst the compliments they were interchanging on their own merits, that there was a Snorro Sturleson entitled to his share in the honours. His work was treated as some of the classics have been by their learned commentators — the text overwhelmed, buried, and forgotten, under annotations and unimportant explanations of it. It is pleasing to observe how the natural taste of a people selects what is good in their literature, what is adapted to the mind of all, with more just tact than even the educated classes among them. While the merit of Snorro was hid from the educated under a mass of learned rubbish, the people both in Norway and Denmark had a true feeling for it; and in 1594 a trans-

lation into Danish of parts of the *Heimskringla*\* was published in Denmark by Mortenssen. In 1599 a priest, Peter Claussen, — himself as wild a man-slaying priest as the priest Thangbrand, or any other of the rough energetic personages in the work of Snorro, — translated the *Heimskringla* for the benefit of his countrymen in Norway, the language of Snorro having become obsolete, or at least obscure, even to the Norwegian peasantry. His translation was published in 1633 by Olaus Wormius, and it became a house-book among the Norwegian bonders.

At the present day, in the dwellings of the remote valleys, especially of the Drontheim district, — such as Stordal, Værdal, Indal, — a well-used copy of some saga, generally that of King Olaf the Saint, reprinted from Peter Claussen's work, will be found along with the Bible, Prayer Book, Christian the Fourth's Law Book, and the Storthing's Transactions, to be the house-father's library. During a winter passed in one of those valleys, the translator, in the course of acquiring the language of the country, borrowed one of those books from his neighbour Arne of Ostgrunden, a bonder or peasant-proprietor of a farm so called. It was the saga of King Olaf the Saint. Reading it in the midst of the historical localities, and of the very houses and descendants of the very men presented to you in the stirring scenes of this saga at the battle of Stiklestad, he may very probably have imbibed an interest which he cannot impart to readers unacquainted

\* The copy of the *Heimskringla* made in 1230 by Snorro's nephew, Sturla, is considered the ground text from which all the other manuscripts have been made; and copies in writing of his work have been made as late as 1567. The exact date of any of the manuscripts used by Mortenssen in 1594, or by Claussen in 1559, printed by Wormius in 1663, or by Peringskiöld in 1697, is not ascertained. They appear to have all had different manuscripts before them; some better, apparently, in some parts, and in others not so perfect. The *Heimskringla* of Schöning, in folio, — the first volume published in 1777, the last in 1826, in Icelandic, Latin, and Danish, at Copenhagen, — is the best.



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with the country, the people, and their social state. He read with delight the account of old manners and ways of living given in the saga,—old, yet not without much resemblance to what still exists in ordinary family life among the bonders. He found, from knowing the localities, the charm of truth from internal evidence in the narratives of that saga. It is not unlikely that these favourable circumstances may have given the translator a higher impression of the literary merit of the *Heimskringla*, than others may receive from it. He was not aware at the time that the volume which delighted him was but a translation of a single saga from Snorro Sturleson's work into a Norse which itself was becoming obsolete, and like the Scotch of Lindsay of Pitscottie's *Chronicle*, was in some degree a forgotten language even among the peasantry. It has since been the occasional and agreeable occupation of his leisure hours to study the work of Snorro in the original. To much knowledge of, or familiarity with the Icelandic, he cannot lay any claim. To get at the meaning and spirit of the text, helping himself over the difficulties, which generally only lay in his own ignorance of the language, by collating every passage he was in doubt about with the meaning given to it in the translations of Peringskiöld, Schöning, and Aal, and to give a plain faithful translation into English of the *Heimskringla*, unencumbered with antiquarian research, and suited to the plain English reader, has been his object.

The short pieces of scaldic poetry which Snorro intermixes with his narrative, and quotes as his authorities for the facts he is telling, are very difficult to deal with in a translation. They are not without a rude grandeur of imagery, and a truthfulness in description of battles and sea-fights; and they have a simplicity which, although often flat, is often natural and impressive. They have probably been originally

delivered *vivâ voce* in recitative, so that the voice, adroitly managed, would form a measure. Icelandic poetry does not, like the Greek or Latin, differ from prose by certain measures or feet in a verse, but has a formation peculiar to itself. All Icelandic poems, or almost all, are divided into strophes consisting of eight lines. The strophe is further subdivided into two half-strophes, and each of these again into two parts. Each part is a fourth of the whole strophe, and contains two verses or lines. The first of these lines is called the fore line, and the second the back line; and the two are connected together, as verses, by rhyme-letters, or rhyme-syllables. This rhyme-letter, or alliteration, consists in having two words in the fore line beginning with the same initial letter; and a third word, that which is the most important in the meaning, in the second or back line, and beginning with the same letter. For example :—

“ Farvel fagnadar  
Fold og heilla.”

“ Farewell, favoured  
Fold (land) and holy.”

The letter F in the word Fold is the head letter of the alliteration, and the same letter in Farvel and fagnadar are the two subsidiary alliterative sounds in the first line. In the use of this alliteration there are several subdivisions, from exceptions or limitations to the general principle. Besides this alliteration or letter-rhyme, there are syllable-rhymes, in which the first syllables of words, instead of the first letters only, form, by their collocation in the fore and back lines, the versification; and if the first syllables rhyme together, the last may be different sounds. Thus, merki and sterka, or gumar and sumir, are perfect syllable-rhymes in a line. End-rhymes, as in the other Gothic languages, are also used in Icelandic ver-



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sification, connected also always with the alliterative and syllabic rhymes. Thus:—

“ Nu er hersis hefnd,  
Vid hilmi efnd.  
Gengr ulfr ok ærn  
Af ynglings bærn.”

The two lines only rhyme together, in Icelandic versification, which are connected by the rules of alliterative verse,—viz. the first and second, and the third and fourth; but the first and third, or second and fourth, are never made to rhyme together. Longer verse-lines than of eight syllables are not used, and lines of three or six appear more common. A short measure, admitting of no pause or cæsura in the middle of the line, appears to have been most agreeable to the Icelandic ear, or mode of recitative in which the scalds have chanted their verses. These observations are taken from Rask’s “*Veiledning til det Islandske Sprog*, 1811;” in which there is a valuable dissertation on the Icelandic versification, with examples of the different kinds of verses. Some later Icelandic scholars are of opinion that what Rask has treated as two lines, on the supposition that the Icelandic versification had no cæsura, had in reality been one line, with the cæsura marked by a rhyme corresponding to the end-rhyme of the line, which middle rhyme is of common occurrence in old English verses. For example, in the following old English verses on the Bee, the line is not concluded at the rhyme in the middle, which marks a strong cæsura or pause, not a total want of it:—

“ In winter daies, when Phœbus’ raies  
Are hid with misty cloud,  
And stormy showers assault her bowers,  
And cause her for to crowd.”

*Baret’s Alvearia*, 1580.

And also in the Latin rhymes of the monks in the middle ages, as, for instance in these,—

“ *Omnia terrena per vices sunt aliena,  
Nunc mei nunc hujus, post mortem nescio cujus,*” —

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the rhyme by no means concludes the line. The mode of writing on parchment or paper has, for economy of the material, been in continuous lines, like prose, without any division, in the manuscripts of old date; so that nothing can be concluded from the writing concerning the length or forms of the verses. Whether the scalds adapted their verses to music, or tunes, seems not well ascertained. Little mention, if any, is made in any of the sagas of tunes, or musical instruments; yet they have had songs. All their pieces are called songs, and are said to be sung, and many of them evidently were intended to be sung. We find mention also of old songs; for instance, the “*Biarkemal*,” was instantly recognised by the whole army at Stiklestad. They must have had tunes for these songs. We find also a refrain, or chorus to songs, mentioned. All, perhaps, that can be safely said of Icelandic versification is, that the system has been very artificial, and full of technical difficulties in the construction; and, independently of the beauties of poetic spirit and ideas, may have had the merit of technical difficulties in the verse adroitly overcome by the scald,—a merit which it would be going too far to condemn, because we, with minds and ears not trained in the same way, cannot feel it. How much of our own most esteemed poetry gives us pleasure from similar conventional sources distinct altogether from poetical imagery, or ideas which all men of all countries and ages would relish and feel pleasure from? There may also have been a harmony and measured cadence given by the voice in reciting or chanting such verses—and they were composed to be recited, not silently read—which are lost to us. All we can judge of them is, that if such verses could be constructed in the English language, they would be with-



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out harmony or other essential property of verse to us; as our minds, ears, and the genius of our language are formed in a different mould. Besides, the peculiarities of the construction of the verse, the poetical language, and the allusions to the Odin mythology, are so obscure, involved, and far-fetched, that volumes of explanation would be necessary almost for every line in any verbatim translation. Torfæus, who was himself an Icclander, and was unquestionably the first of northern antiquaries, declares that much of the scaldic poetry is so obscure, that no meaning at all can be twisted out of it by the most intense study. The older and younger Eddas were in fact hand-books composed expressly for explaining the mythological allusions and metaphors occurring in the poetry of the scalds; so that this obscurity and difficulty appear to have been felt even before the Odin worship was totally extinct, and its mythology forgotten. Examples will best illustrate the obscurity of allusion. In the verses composed by Berse, quoted in the 48th chapter of Olaf the Saint's Saga, in the sixth line, the literal translation of the text would be, "Giver of the fire of the ship's out-field." The "out-field" of the ship is the ocean which surrounds a ship, as the out-field surrounds a farm. The fire of the ocean is gold; because Ægir, when he received the gods into his hall in the depths of the ocean, lighted it with gold hung round instead of the sun's rays; and hence the ocean's rays is a common poetical term for gold in the scaldic poetry. Now "the giver of the fire of the ship's out-field" means the giver of gold, the generous king. Another example of the obscurity of allusion is in the first line of the verses quoted in the 21st chapter of Olaf Tryggvesson's Saga. In the original the expression is literally, "Hater of the bow-seat's fire." Now the bow-seat is the hand which carries the bow; its fire is the gold which adorns the hand in rings or

bracelets; and the hater of this fire is the man who hates to keep it, who gives it away, — the generous man. Every piece almost of the scaldic poetry quoted in the *Heimskringla* has allusions of this obscure kind, which would be unintelligible without voluminous explanation; and yet the character of these short poetical pieces does not consist in these, which seem to be but expletives for filling out their artificial structure of verses, but in their rude simplicity and wild grandeur. The translator intended at first to have left out these pieces of scaldic poetry altogether. They are not essential to Snorro's prose narrative of the events to which they refer. They are not even authorities for the facts he details, although he quotes them in that view; for they only give the summary or heads of events of which he gives the particular minute accounts. They appear to be catch-words, or preliminary verses, for aiding the memory in recurring to some long account or saga in prose of which they are the compendium or text. The oldest translator also of Snorro's work, Peter Claussen, who is supposed to have had, in 1599, a manuscript to translate from which is now lost, omits altogether the verses. The translator consulted a literary friend, — his son, Mr. S. Laing, late Fellow of St. John's College Cambridge, now of the Railroad Department of the Board of Trade, — and went over with him the translation of the prose narrative of Snorro, and translations into prose of the poetical pieces connected with it. They came to the conclusion that although these pieces of scaldic poetry are not essential to Snorro's prose narrative of the historical events to which they refer, they are essential to the spirit and character of Snorro's work. However obscure, unpoetical, monotonous in the ideas, or uninteresting and flat they may be, they show the mind, spirit, and intellectual state of the age and people, — show what it was they considered



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poetry; and the poorest of these compositions have, in this view, great historical interest. Many of them are, especially in the descriptions and imagery connected with the warfare of those times, highly poetical; and, under any forms of verse or language, the “Hakon-armal,” chapter 33. of Hakon the Good’s Saga, the “Biarkemal,” chapter 220. of Saint Olaf’s Saga, and many of the pieces of Sigvat the Scald and others, would be acknowledged as genuine poetry. On examining more closely these pieces of scaldic poetry, it appears, in general, that the second half of the strophe of eight lines, which their rules of versification required as the length of their poetical pieces, is but a repetition of the idea of the first half, and the second two lines but an echo of the two first. The whole meaning—all that the scald has to say in the strophe, is very often comprehended within the two first lines, the fore line and back line, which are connected together by the alliterative letters or syllables; and the one idea is expanded, only in other words, over the whole surface of the rest of the strophe of eight lines. The extraordinary metaphors and mythological allusions, the epithets so long-winded and obscure, the never-ending imagery of wolves glutted and ravens feasted by the deeds of the warriors, arise evidently from the necessity imposed on the scald of finding alliteratives, and conforming to the other strict rules of their versification. The beauty of this artificial construction is lost even upon the best Icelandic scholars of our times; and it appears to have been the only beauty many of these pieces of poetry ever pretended to, for the ideas so expressed are often not in any way poetical. Grundtvig, in his translation into Danish of the *Heimskringla*, and some German translators of scaldic poems, have cut the loop of this difficulty. They have taken only the most poetical of the pieces of the scalds, and have freely translated,

or freely paraphrased them into modern ballads, or songs, in modern measures. Grundtvig has done so with great poetic genius and spirit; and his translations have justly placed him in the first rank of Danish poets. Many of his translations might be placed by the side of the best pieces of Burger or of Scott in the ballad style; but then they are Grundtvig's, not the scalds'. They are no more a translation of the verses of the scalds quoted by Snorro Sturleson, than Shakspeare's Hamlet is a translation of the story of Hamlet in Saxo Grammaticus.

The translator and Mr. S. Laing have rendered into English verse these scaldic pieces of poetry, from prose translations of them laboriously made out. The ideas in each strophe, the allusions, and imagery, were first ascertained by collating the Norse translations of them in M. Jacob Aal's excellent translation of the *Heimskringla* published in 1838, and those in the folio edition of 1777, and the Latin prose translations of them by Thorlacius and Werlauf, in the sixth volume of that edition, published in 1826, with the Icelandic text.\* The ideas, allusions, and imagery are, much oftener than could be expected, obtained, and rendered line for line; and the meaning of each half strophe is always, it is believed, given in the corresponding four English verses. The English reader, it is hoped, will thus be better able to form an idea of the poetry of the scalds, than if the translators had been more ambitious, and had given a looser paraphrase of those pieces according to their own taste or fancy. Some of these pieces of scaldic poetry, it will be seen even by this

\* The versions of Jacob Aal and Thorlacius and Werlauf into the cognate Northern tongue are much more graphic than the Latin, and more true to the spirit of the Icelandic. These versions have been referred to for the meaning of the scald in all cases in which the Icelandic was obscure.



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dim reflection, have very considerable poetical merit; many, again, are extremely flat and prosaic, and are merely prose ideas cut into the shape of verse by the scald. These, it must be recollected, may have had their beauty and merit in the technical construction of the verse, and may have been very pleasing and harmonious, although such merits is lost upon us in a different language. The ideas are all we can get at; not the forms and technical beauties of the expression of those ideas. It will not escape the observation of the English reader that in the ideas there is a very tedious monotony, in the descriptions of battles and bloodshed, in the imagery of war, in the epithets applied to the warriors and kings; and in general there is a total want of sentiment or feeling. The spirit is altogether material. The scalds deal only in description of material objects, and mainly of those connected with warfare by sea or land. But this, no doubt, belongs to the spirit of the state of society and times; and it will be considered of some importance to know what the ideas were which were then considered poetical, and which pleased the cultivated classes for whom the scalds composed. The English public will be able, in some degree, from these translations, to judge what the poetry of the scalds was,—what may have been its real poetic merit: of the labour and difficulty of presenting these pieces to the public, even in this imperfect way, none can judge but those who will try the same task.

THE

# HEIMSKRINGLA;

OR,

## CHRONICLE OF THE KINGS OF NORWAY.

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### PREFACE OF SNORRO STURLESON.

IN this book I have had old stories written down, as I have heard them told by intelligent people, concerning chiefs who have held dominion in the northern countries, and who spoke the Danish tongue; and also concerning some of their family branches, according to what has been told me. Some of this is found in ancient family registers, in which the pedigrees of kings and other personages of high birth are reckoned up, and part is written down after old songs and ballads which our forefathers had for their amusement. Now, although we cannot just say what truth there may be in these, yet we have the certainty that old and wise men held them to be true.

PREFACE.

Thiodolf hinn Frode\* of Huina was the scald of

\* Family surnames were not in use, and scarcely are so now, among the Northmen. Olaf the son of Harald was called Olaf Haraldson; Olaf's son Magnus, Magnus Olafsson; and his son Hakon, Hakon Magnusson: thus dropping altogether any common name with the family predecessors. This custom necessarily made the tracing of family connection difficult, and dependent upon the memory of scalds or others. The appellations Fair-haired, Black, &c., have been given to help in distinguishing individuals of the same name from each other. Hinn Fröde the Wise, the Much-knowing,—the Polyhistor, as it is trans-



PREFACE. Harald Haarfager, and he composed a poem for King Ragnvald the Mountain-high, which is called "Ynglingatal." This Ragnvald was a son of Olaf Geirstad-Alf, the brother of King Halfdan the Black. In this poem thirty of his forefathers are reckoned up, and the death and burial-place of each are given. He begins with Fiolner, a son of Ingvifrey, whom the Swedes, long after his time, worshipped and sacrificed to, and from whom the race or family of the Ynglingers take their name.

Eyvind Skaldaspiller also reckoned up the ancestors of Earl Hakon the Great in a poem called "Haleigia-tal," composed about Hakon; and therein he mentions Sæming, a son of Ingvifrey, and he likewise tells of the death and funeral rites of each. The lives and times of the Yngling race were written from Thiodolf's relation enlarged afterwards by the accounts of intelligent people.

As to funeral rites, the earliest age is called the Age of Burning; because all the dead were consumed by fire, and over their ashes were raised standing stones.\* But after Frey was buried under a mound at Upsal†, many chiefs raised mounds, as commonly as stones, to the memory of their relatives.

The Age of Mounds began properly in Denmark after Dan Mikillati‡ had raised for himself a burial-mound, and ordered that he should be buried in it on his death, with his royal ornaments and armour, his horse and saddle-furniture, and other valuable goods;

lated into Latin by the antiquarians,—is applied to many persons; and is possibly connected with the old Norman French appellative Prud-Prud'homme.

\* Bauta-Steina are in Scotland called standing stones by the common people, and we have no other word in our language for those monuments.

† Uppsalir, the High Halls, was not the present city of Upsal; but Gamle Upsal, two miles north of the present Upsal.

‡ Mikill-lati — the Magnificent.

and many of his descendants followed his example. But the burning of the dead continued, long after that time, to be the custom of the Swedes and Northmen. Iceland was occupied in the time that Harald Haarfager was the King of Norway. There were scalds in Harald's court whose poems the people know by heart even at the present day, together with all the songs about the kings who have ruled in Norway since his time; and we rest the foundations of our story principally upon the songs which were sung in the presence of the chiefs themselves or of their sons, and take all to be true that is found in such poems about their feats and battles: for although it be the fashion with scalds to praise most those in whose presence they are standing, yet no one would dare to relate to a chief what he, and all those who heard it, knew to be a false and imaginary, not a true account of his deeds; because that would be mockery, not praise.

## OF THE PRIEST ARE HINN FRODE.

The priest Are hinn Frode\* (the Wise), a son of Thorgils the son of Gellis, was the first man in this country who wrote down in the Norse language narratives of events both old and new. In the beginning of his book he wrote principally about the first settlements in Iceland, the laws and government, and next of the lagmen†, and how long each had administered the law; and he reckoned the years at first, until the time when Christianity was introduced into Iceland, and afterwards reckoned from that to his own times. To this he added many other subjects, such as the lives and times of kings of Norway and Denmark,

\* Are Frode was born in Iceland 1067, and lived to 1148, or according to some 1158.

† Lagmen were district judges appointed by the Things to administer the law.



PREFACE. and also of England; besides accounts of great events which have taken place in this country itself. His narratives are considered by many men of knowledge to be the most remarkable of all; because he was a man of good understanding, and so old that his birth was as far back as the year after Harald Sigurdson's fall. He wrote, as he himself says, the lives and times of the kings of Norway from the report of Odd Kol-lason, a grandson of Hall of Sidu. Odd again took his information from Thorgeir Afradskoll, who was an intelligent man, and so old that when Earl Hakon the Great was killed he was dwelling at Nidaros — the same place at which King Olaf Tryggvesson afterwards laid the foundation of the merchant town of Drontheim which is now there. The priest Are came, when seven years old, to Haukadal to Hall Thorarinson, and was there fourteen years. Hall was a man of great knowledge and of excellent memory; and he could even remember being baptized, when he was three years old, by the priest Thangbrand, the year before Christianity was established by law in Iceland. Are was twelve years of age when Bishop Isleif\* died, and at his death eighty years had elapsed since the fall of Olaf Tryggvesson. Hall died nine years later than Bishop Isleif, and had attained nearly the age of ninety-four years. Hall had traded between the two countries, and had been in partnership in trading concerns with King Olaf the Saint, by which his circumstances had been greatly improved, and he had become well acquainted with the kingdom of Norway. He had fixed his residence in Haukadal when he was thirty years of age, and he had dwelt there nearly sixty-four years, as Are tells us. Teit, a son of Bishop Isleif, was fostered in the house of Hall of

\* Isleif was the first bishop of Iceland, and had studied at Erfurth in Germany, and died 1079

Haukadal, and afterwards dwelt there himself. He taught Are the priest, and gave him information about many circumstances which Are afterwards wrote down. Are also got many a piece of information from Thurid, a daughter of the godar\* Snorro. She was wise and intelligent, and remembered her father Snorro, who was nearly thirty-five years of age when Christianity was introduced into Iceland, and died a year after King Olaf the Saint's fall.† So it is not wonderful that Are the priest had good information about ancient events both here in Iceland, and abroad, being a man anxious for information, intelligent, and of excellent memory, and having besides learned much from old intelligent persons.

\* Godars were priests and judges, and an hereditary class, apparently, in Iceland in the heathen time. But we hear little or nothing of such a priesthood in Norway; nor is it clear what their civil jurisdiction may have been in Iceland compared to that of the lagmen, or whether the godars, originally the priests by hereditary right, as descendants of Odin's twelve diars, were not ex officio the lagmen or judges also.

† This happened 1030.



## I.

## SAGA I.

## YNGLINGA SAGA,

OR THE STORY OF THE YNGLING FAMILY FROM ODIN TO  
HALFDAN THE BLACK.

CHAPTER  
I.  
Of the si-  
tuation of  
countries.

IT is said that the earth's circle which the human race inhabits is torn across into many bights, so that great seas run into the land from the out-ocean. Thus it is known that a great sea goes in at Niorvasund\*, and up to the land of Jerusalem. From the same sea a long sea-bight stretches towards the north-east, and is called the Black Sea, and divides the three parts of the earth; of which the eastern part is called Asia, and the western is called by some Europa, by some Enea. Northward of the Black Sea lies Swithiod the Great†, or the Cold. The Great Sweden is reckoned by some not less than the Saracens' land‡; others compare it to the Great Blueland.§ The northern part of Swithiod lies uninhabited on account of frost and cold, as likewise the southern parts of Blueland are waste from the burning of the sun. In Swithiod are many great domains, and many wonderful races of men, and many kinds of languages. There are giants, and there are dwarfs, and there are also blue men. There are wild beasts, and dreadfully large dragons. On the north side of the mountains which lie outside of all inhabited lands runs a river

\* Niorvasund, the Straits of Gibraltar; so called from the first Northman who sailed through them.

† Swithiod the Great, or the Cold, is the ancient Sarmatia; and is also called Godheim in the mythological sagas, or the home of Odin and the other gods. Swithiod the Less is Sweden proper, and is called Mannheim, or the home of the kings the descendants of these gods.

‡ Serkland means North Africa and Spain, and the countries of the Saracens in Asia.

§ Blaland, the country of the blacks in Africa.

SAGA I.  

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through Swithiod, which is properly called by the name of Tanais, but was formerly called Tanaquisl, or Vanaquisl, and which falls into the ocean at the Black Sea. The country of the people on the Vanaquisl was called Vanaland, or Vanaheim; and the river separates the three parts of the world, of which the easternmost part is called Asia, and the westernmost Europe.

The country east of the Tanaquisl in Asia was called Asaland, or Asaheim, and the chief city in that land was called Asgaard.\* In that city was a chief called Odin, and it was a great place for sacrifice. It was the custom there that twelve temple godars† should both direct the sacrifices, and also judge the people. They were called Diars, or Drotners, and all the people served and obeyed them. Odin was a great and very far-travelled warrior, who conquered many kingdoms, and so successful was he that in every battle the victory was on his side. It was the belief of his people that victory belonged to him in every battle. It was his custom when he sent his men into battle, or on any expedition, that he first laid his hand upon their heads, and called down a blessing upon them; and then they believed their undertaking would be successful. His people also were accustomed, whenever they fell into danger by land or sea, to call upon his name; and they thought that always they got comfort and aid by it, for where he was they thought help was near. Often he went away so long that he passed many seasons on his journeys.

CHAPTER  
II.  
Of the  
people of  
Asia.

Odin had two brothers, the one called Ve, the other

\* Asgaard is supposed by those who look for historical fact in mythological tales to be the present Assor; others that it is Chasgar in the Caucasian ridge, called by Strabo Aspurgum — the Asburg or castle of Aas; which word Aas still remains in the northern languages, signifying a ridge of high land.

† Hof godars, whose office of priests and judges continued hereditary in Scandinavia.



SAGA I.  
 CHAPTER  
 III.  
 Of Odin's  
 brothers.

Vitir, and they governed the kingdom when he was absent. It happened once when Odin had gone to a great distance, and had been so long away that the people of Asa doubted if he would ever return home, that his two brothers took it upon themselves to divide his estate; but both of them took his wife Frigg to themselves. Odin soon after returned home, and took his wife back.

CHAPTER  
 IV.  
 Of Odin's  
 war with  
 the people  
 of Vana-  
 land.

Odin went out with a great army against the Vanaland people; but they were well prepared, and defended their land, so that victory was changeable, and they ravaged the lands of each other, and did great damage. They tired of this at last, and on both sides appointed a meeting for establishing peace, made a truce, and exchanged hostages. The Vanaland people sent their best men, Niord the Rich, and his son Frey. The people of Asaland sent a man called Hæner, whom they thought well suited to be a chief\*, as he was a stout and very handsome man, and with him they sent a man of great understanding called Mimir; and on the other side the Vanaland people sent the wisest man in their community, who was called Quaser. Now, when Hæner came to Vanaheim he was immediately made a chief, and Mimir came to him with good counsel on all occasions. But when Hæner stood in the Things or other meetings, if Mimir was not near him, and any difficult matter was laid before him, he always answered in one way, — “ Now let others give their advice; ” so that the Vanaland people got a suspicion that the Asaland people had deceived them in the exchange of men. They took Mimir, therefore, and beheaded him, and sent his head to the Asaland people. Odin took the head, smeared it with herbs so that it should not rot, and sang incantations

\* These exchanges appear not to have been of hostages, but of chiefs to be incorporated with the people to whom they were sent, and thus to preserve peace.

over it. Thereby he gave it the power that it spoke to him, and discovered to him many secrets. Odin placed Niord and Frey as priests of the sacrifices, and they became deities of the Asaland people. Niord's daughter Freya was priestess of the sacrifices, and first taught the Asaland people the magic art, as it was in use and fashion among the Vanaland people. While Niord was with the Vanaland people he had taken his own sister in marriage, for that was allowed by their law; and their children were Freyn and Freya. But among the Asaland people it was forbidden to come together in so near relationship.

There goes a great mountain barrier from north-east to south-west, which divides the Greater Sweden from other kingdoms. South of this mountain ridge it is not far to Turkland, where Odin had great possessions. But Odin having foreknowledge, and magic-sight, knew that his posterity would come to settle and dwell in the northern half of the world. In those times the Roman chiefs went wide around in the world, subduing to themselves all people; and on this account many chiefs fled from their domains. Odin set his brothers Ve and Vitir over Asgaard; and he himself, with all the gods and a great many other people, wandered out, first westward to Gardarige\*, and then south to Saxland.† He had many sons; and after having subdued an extensive kingdom in Saxland, he set his sons to defend the country. He himself went northwards to the sea, and took up his abode in an island which is called Odinsö in Fyen. Then he sent Gefion across the sound to the north, to discover new countries; and she came to King Gylfe, who gave her a ploughgate of land. Then she went to Jotunheim, and bore four sons to a giant, and transformed them into a yoke of oxen, and yoked them to a plough, and broke out the land into the

CHAPTER  
V.  
Odin divides his kingdom: also concerning Gefion.

\* Gardarige is Russia.

† Saxland is Germany.



## SAGA I.

ocean right opposite to Odinsö, which land was called Sealand, where she afterwards settled and dwelt. Skiold, a son of Odin, married her, and they dwelt at Leidre.\* Where the ploughed land was is a lake or sea called Laage. In the Swedish land the fiords of Laage correspond to the nesses in Sealand. Brage the Old sings thus of it:† —

“ Gefion from Gylfe drove away,  
To add new land to Denmark’s sway, —  
Blythe Gefion ploughing in the smoke  
That steamed up from her oxen-yoke :  
Four heads, eight forehead stars had they,  
Bright gleaming, as she ploughed away ;  
Dragging new lands from the deep main  
To join them to the sweet isle’s plain.”

Now when Odin heard that things were in a prosperous condition in the land to the east beside Gylfe, he went thither, and Gylfe made a peace with him, for Gylfe thought he had no strength to oppose the people of Asaland. Odin and Gylfe had many tricks and enchantments against each other; but the Asaland people had always the superiority. Odin took up his residence at the Mælare lake, at the place now called Sigtun. There he erected a large temple, where there were sacrifices according to the customs of the Asaland people. He appropriated to himself the whole of that district of country, and called it Sigtun. To the temple gods he gave also domains. Niord dwelt in Noatun, Frey in Upsal, Heimdal in Himinberg, Thor in Thrudvong, Baldor in Breidablik; to all of them he gave good domains.

CHAPTER  
VI.  
Of Odin’s  
accom-  
plishments.

When Odin of Asaland came to the north, and the gods with him, he began to exercise and teach others the arts which the people long afterwards have

\* Leidre, or Hleidre, or Leire, at the end of Isafiord, in the county of Lithraborg, is considered the oldest royal seat in Denmark.

† This fable is possibly the echo of some tradition of a convulsion in which the ocean broke into the Baltic through the Sound and Belts, or in which the island of Sealand was raised from the deep.

practised. Odin was the cleverest of all, and from him all the others learned their magic arts; and he knew them first, and knew many more than other people. But now, to tell why he is held in such high respect, we must mention various causes that contributed to it. When sitting among his friends his countenance was so beautiful and friendly, that the spirits of all were exhilarated by it; but when he was in war he appeared fierce and dreadful. This arose from his being able to change his colour and form in any way he liked. Another cause was, that he conversed so cleverly and smoothly, that all who heard were persuaded. He spoke every thing in rhyme, such as now composed, and which we call scald-craft. He and his temple gods were called song-smiths, for from them came that art of song into the northern countries. Odin could make his enemies in battle blind, or deaf, or terror-struck, and their weapons so blunt that they could no more cut than a willow twig; on the other hand, his men rushed forwards without armour, were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit their shields, and were strong as bears or wild bulls, and killed people at a blow, and neither fire nor iron told upon them. These were called Bersærkers.\*

Odin could transform his shape: his body would lie as if dead, or asleep; but then he would be in shape of a fish, or worm, or bird, or beast, and be off in a twinkling to distant lands upon his own or other people's business. With words alone he could quench fire, still the ocean in tempest, and turn the wind to any quarter he pleased. Odin had a ship which was called Skidbladnir, in which he sailed over wide

CHAPTER  
VII.  
Of Odin's  
feats.

\* Bersærker — so called from ber, bare; and serkr, shirt: that is, bare of any shirt of mail, as they fought without armour. The Bersærkers appear to have gone into battle intoxicated with opium, or some exciting drug; as the reaction after their bersærker gang was over, and their lassitude and exhaustion, prove the use of some stimulant previously to a great excess.



## SAGA I.

seas, and which he could roll up like a cloth.\* Odin carried with him Mimir's head, which told him all the news of other countries. Sometimes even he called the dead out of the earth, or set himself beside the burial-mounds; whence he was called the ghost-sovereign, and lord of the mounds. He had two ravens, to whom he had taught the speech of man; and they flew far and wide through the land, and brought him the news. In all such things he was pre-eminently wise. He taught all these arts in Runes, and songs which are called incantations, and therefore the Asaland people are called incantation-smiths. Odin understood also the art in which the greatest power is lodged, and which he himself practised; namely, what is called magic. By means of this he could know beforehand the predestined fate† of men, or their not yet completed lot; and also bring on the death, ill luck, or bad health of people, and take the strength or wit from one person and give it to another. But after such witchcraft followed such weakness and anxiety, that it was not thought respectable for men to practise it; and therefore the priestesses were brought up in this art. Odin knew finely where all missing cattle were concealed under the earth, and understood the songs by which the earth, the hills, the stones, and mounds were opened to him; and he bound those who dwell in them by the power of his word, and went in and took what he pleased. From these arts he became very celebrated. His enemies dreaded him; his friends put their trust in him, and relied on his power and on himself. He taught the most of his arts to his priests of the sacrifices, and they came nearest to himself in all wisdom and witch-knowledge. Many

\* This possibly refers to boats covered with skin or leather — the coracle of the Welsh and Irish.

† Orlög—the original law, the primæval law fixed from the beginning. It is curious that this idea of a predestination existed in the religion of Odin.

SAGA I.  

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others, however, occupied themselves much with it; and from that time witchcraft spread far and wide, and continued long. People sacrificed to Odin, and the twelve chiefs from Asaland,—called them their gods, and believed in them long after. From Odin's name came the name Audun, which people gave to his sons; and from Thor's name comes Thorer, also Thorarinn; and also it is sometimes augmented by other additions, as Steenthor, or Hafthor, and many kinds of alterations.

Odin established the same law in his land that had been in force in Asaland. Thus he established by law that all dead men should be burned, and their property laid with them upon the pile, and the ashes be cast into the sea or buried in the earth. Thus, said he, every one will come to Valhalla with the riches he had with him upon the pile; and he would also enjoy whatever he himself had buried in the earth. For men of consequence a mound should be raised to their memory, and for all other warriors who had been distinguished for manhood a standing stone; which custom remained long after Odin's time. Towards winter there should be blood-sacrifice for a good year, and in the middle of winter for a good crop; and the third sacrifice should be in summer, for victory in battle. Over all Sweden the people paid Odin a scatt or tax—so much on each head; but he had to defend the country from enemy or disturbance, and pay the expense of the sacrifice feasts towards winter for a good year.

CHAPTER  
VIII.  
Of Odin's  
lawgiving.

Niord took a wife called Skada; but she would not live with him, but married afterwards Odin, and had many sons by him, of whom one was called Sæming; and of this Eyvind Skaldaspiller sings thus:—

CHAPTER  
IX.  
Of Niord's  
marriage.

“ To Asa's son Queen Skada bore  
Sæming, who dyed his shield in gore,—  
The giant-queen of rock and snow,  
Who loves to dwell on earth below,



## SAGA I.

The iron pine-tree's daughter, she  
 Sprung from the rocks that rib the sea,  
 To Odin bore full many a son,  
 Heroes of many a battle won."

To Sæming Earl Hakon the Great reckoned up his pedigree. This Sweden they called Mannheim, but the Great Sweden they called Godheim; and of Godheim great wonders and novelties were related.

CHAPTER  
 X.  
 Of Odin's  
 death.

Odin died in his bed in Sweden; and when he was near his death he made himself be marked with the point of a spear\*, and said he was going to Godheim, and would give a welcome there to all his friends, and all brave warriors should be dedicated to him; and the Swedes believed that he was gone to the ancient Asgaard, and would live there eternally. Then began the belief in Odin, and the calling upon him. The Swedes believed that he often showed himself to them before any great battle. To some he gave victory; others he invited to himself; and they reckoned both of these to be well off in their fate. Odin was burnt, and at his pile there was great splendour. It was their faith, that the higher the smoke arose in the air, the higher he would be raised whose pile it was; and the richer he would be, the more property that was consumed with him.

CHAPTER  
 XI.  
 Of Niord.

Niord of Noatun was then the sole sovereign of the Swedes; and he continued the sacrifices, and was called the drot or sovereign by the Swedes, and he received scatt and gifts from them. In his days were peace and plenty, and such good years, in all respects, that the Swedes believed Niord ruled over the growth of seasons and the prosperity of the people. In his time

\* The meaning seems to be, that he was marked with the sign of the head of a spear; that is, with the sign of the cross. The sign of Thor's hammer, viz. the head of a battle-axe or halberd, was said to be used as the sign of the cross was after Christianity was introduced: it was a kind of consecration by a holy sign. But this is probably a pious interpolation.

all the diars or gods died, and blood-sacrifices were made for them. Niord died on the bed of sickness, and before he died made himself be marked for Odin with the spear-point. The Swedes burned him, and all wept over his grave-mound.

SAGA I.

Freyr took the kingdom after Niort, and was called drot by the Swedes, and they paid taxes to him. He was, like his father, fortunate in friends and in good seasons. Freyr built a great temple at Upsal, made it his chief seat, and gave it all his taxes, his land, and goods. Then began the Upsal domains\*, which have remained ever since. Then began, in his days, the Frode-peace; and then there were good seasons in all the land, which the Swedes ascribed to Freyr, so that he was more worshipped than the other gods, as the people became much richer in his days by reason of the peace and good seasons. His wife was called Gerder, daughter of Gymis, and their son was called Fiölner. Freyr was called by another name, Yngve; and this name Yngve was considered long after in his race as a name of honour, so that his descendants have since been called Ynglingers. Freyr fell into a sickness; and as his illness took the upper hand, his men took the plan of letting few approach him. In the meantime they raised a great mound, in which they placed a door with three holes in it. Now when Freyr died they bore him secretly into the mound, but told the Swedes he was alive; and they kept watch over him for three years. They brought all the taxes into the mound, and through the one hole they put in the gold, through the other the silver, and through the third the copper money that was paid. Peace and good seasons continued.

CHAPTER  
XII.  
Freyr's  
death.

\* The Upsal domains were certain estates for the support of the sovereign, and of the temple and rites of worship; which after the introduction of Christianity remained with the crown, and constituted a large portion of the crown property in Sweden.



SAGA I.  
 CHAPTER  
 XIII.  
 Of Freya  
 and her  
 daughters.

Freya alone remained of the gods, and she became on this account so celebrated that all women of distinction were called by her name, whence they now have the title Frue; so that every woman is called frue, or mistress over her property, and the wife is called the house-frue. Freya continued the blood-sacrifices. Freya had also many other names. Her husband was called Oder, and her daughters Hnoss and Gerseme. They were so very beautiful, that afterwards the most precious jewels were called by their names.

When it became known to the Swedes that Freyr was dead, and yet peace and good seasons continued, they believed that it must be so as long as Freyr remained in Sweden; and therefore they would not burn his remains, but called him the god of this world, and afterwards offered continually blood-sacrifices to him, principally for peace and good seasons.

CHAPTER  
 XIV.  
 Of King  
 Fiolner's  
 death.

Fiolner, Yngve Frey's son, ruled thereafter over the Swedes and the Upsal domains. He was powerful, and lucky in seasons and in holding the peace. Fridfrode ruled then in Hleidre, and between them there was great friendship and visiting. Once when Fiolner went to Frode in Sealand, a great feast was prepared for him, and invitations to it were sent all over the country. Frode had a large house, in which there was a great vessel many ells high, and put together of great pieces of timber; and this vessel stood in a lower room. Above it was a loft, in the floor of which was an opening through which liquor was poured into this vessel. The vessel was full of mead, which was excessively strong. In the evening Fiolner, with his attendants, was taken into the adjoining loft to sleep. In the night he went out to the gallery outside to seek the privy of the house, and he was very sleepy, and exceedingly drunk. As he came back to his room he went along the gallery to

the door of another loft, went into it, and his foot slipping he fell into the vessel of mead, and was drowned. So says Thiodolf of Huine: —

SAGA I.

“ In Frode’s hall the fearful word,  
The death-foreboding sound was heard :  
The cry of fey\* denouncing doom,  
Was heard at night in Frode’s home.  
And when brave Frode came, he found  
Swithiod’s dark chief, Fiolner, drowned.  
In Frode’s mansion drowned was he,  
Drowned in a waveless, windless sea.”

Swegder took the kingdom after his father, and he made a solemn vow to seek Godheim and Odin. He went with twelve men through the world, and came to Turkland, and the Great Sweden, where he found many of his connections. He was five years on this journey; and when he returned home to Sweden he remained there for some time. He had got a wife in Vanheim, who was called Vana, and their son was Vanland. Swegder went out afterwards to seek again for Godheim, and came to a mansion on the east side of Sweden called Stein, where there was a stone as big as a large house. In the evening after sunset, as Swegder was going from the drinking-table to his sleeping-room, he cast his eye upon the stone, and saw that a dwarf was sitting under it. Swegder and his man were very drunk, and they ran towards the stone. The dwarf stood in the door, and called to Swegder, and told him to come in, and he should see Odin. Swegder ran into the stone, which instantly closed behind him, and Swegder never came back. Thiodolf of Huine tells of this: —

CHAPTER  
XV.  
Of Sweg-  
der.

\* Fey, feig, is used in the same sense in the northern languages as in Scotland, denoting the acts or words or sounds preceding, and supposed to be portending, a sudden death. “The gauger is fey,” in Sir Walter Scott’s novel “Guy Mannering,” is an expression seized by that great painter of Scottish life from the common people, and applied in its true meaning.



## SAGA I.

“ By Diurnir’s\* elfin race,  
 Who haunt the cliffs and shun day’s face,  
 The valiant Swegdir was deceived,  
 The elf’s false words the king believed.  
 The dauntless hero rushing on,  
 Passed through the yawning mouth of stone :  
 It yawned—it shut—the hero fell,  
 In Sækmime’s† hall, where giants dwell.”

CHAPTER  
 XVI.  
 Of Van-  
 land,  
 Swegder’s  
 son.

Vanland, Swegder’s son, succeeded his father, and ruled over the Upsal domain. He was a great warrior, and went far around in different lands. Once he took up his winter abode in Finland with Snio the Old, and got his daughter Drisa in marriage; but in spring he set out leaving Drisa behind, and although he had promised to return within three years he did not come back for ten. Then Drisa sent a message to the witch Hulda; and sent Visbur, her son by Vanland, to Sweden. Drisa bribed the witch-wife Hulda, either that she should bewitch Vanland to return to Finland, or kill him. When this witch-work was going on Vanland was at Upsal, and a great desire came over him to go to Finland; but his friends and counsellors advised him against it, and said the witchcraft of the Fin people showed itself in this desire of his to go there. He then became very drowsy, and laid himself down to sleep; but when he had slept but a little while, he cried out, saying, “ Mara ‡ was treading upon him.” His men hastened to him to help him; but when they took hold of his head she trod on his legs, and when they laid hold of his legs she pressed upon his head; and it was his death. The Swedes took his body and burnt it at a river called Skytaa, where a standing stone was raised over him. Thus says Thiodolf:—

\* Diurnir, the second chief of the dwarfs or elves, in the Scandinavian mythology.

† Sækmimer—the giant of the rocks, whom Odin visited under the assumed name of Ividur.

‡ Mara, the nightmare. We retain the name, and the notion that it is a demon riding or treading on the sleeper.

“ And Vanland, in a fatal hour,  
 Was dragg’d by Grimhild’s daughter’s power,  
 The witch-wife’s, to the dwelling-place  
 Where men meet Odin face to face.  
 Trampled to death, to Skyta’s shore  
 The corpse his faithful followers bore ;  
 And there they burnt, with heavy hearts,  
 The good chief killed by witchcraft’s arts.”

Visbur inherited after his father Vanland. He married the daughter of Aude the Rich, and gave her as her bride-gift three large farms, and a gold ornament. They had two sons, Gisle and Ond ; but Visbur left her and took another wife, whereupon she went home to her father with her two sons. Visbur had a son who was called Domald, and his stepmother used witchcraft to give him ill-luck. Now, when Visbur’s sons were, the one twelve, the other thirteen years of age, they went to their father’s place, and desired to have their mother’s dower ; but he would not deliver it to them. Then they said that the gold ornament should be the death of the best man in all his race ; and they returned home. Then they began again with enchantments and witchcraft, to try if they could destroy their father. The sorceress Hulda said that by witchcraft she could bring it about by this means, that a murderer of his own kin should never be wanting in the Yngling race ; and they agreed to have it so. Thereafter they collected men, came unexpectedly in the night on Visbur, and burned him in his house. So sings Thiodolf :—

CHAPTER  
 XVII.  
 Of Visbur’s  
 death.

“ Have the fire-dogs’ fierce tongues yelling  
 Lapt Visbur’s blood on his own hearth ?  
 Have the flames consumed the dwelling  
 Of the hero’s soul on earth ?  
 Madly ye acted, who set free  
 The forest foe, red fire, night thief,  
 Fell brother of the raging sea\*,  
 Against your father and your chief.”

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\* Forniot was father of Loge, Ægir, and Kara ; or Fire, the Sea, and the Wind ; and hence fire is called by the scalds the brother of the



SAGA I.  
CHAPTER  
XVIII.  
Of Domald's  
death.

Domald took the heritage after his father Visbur, and ruled over the land. As in his time there was great famine and distress, the Swedes made great offerings of sacrifice at Upsal. The first autumn they sacrificed oxen, but the succeeding season was not improved by it. The following autumn they sacrificed men, but the succeeding year was rather worse. The third autumn, when the offer of sacrifices should begin, a great multitude of Swedes came to Upsal; and now the chiefs held consultations with each other, and all agreed that the times of scarcity were on account of their king Domald, and they resolved to offer him for good seasons, and to assault and kill him, and sprinkle the altar of the gods with his blood. And they did so. Thiodolf tells of this: —

“ It has happened oft ere now,  
That foeman's weapon has laid low  
The crowned head, where battle plain  
Was miry red with the blood-rain.  
But Domald dies by bloody arms,  
Raised not by foes in war's alarms,—  
Raised by his Swedish liegeman's hand,  
To bring good seasons to the land.”

CHAPTER  
XIX.  
Of Domar's  
death.

Domald's son, called Domar, next ruled over the land. He reigned long, and in his days were good seasons and peace. Nothing is told of him but that he died in his bed in Upsal, and was transported to the Fyrisvold, where his body was burned on the river-bank, and where his standing stone still remains. So says Thiodolf: —

“ I have asked wise men to tell  
Where Domar rests, and they knew well.  
Domar, on Fyrie's wide-spread ground,  
Was burned, and laid on Ingve's mound.”

CHAPTER  
XX.  
Of Dyggve's  
death.

Dyggve was the name of his son, who succeeded him in ruling the land; and about him nothing is said

sea. Loge is a word still retained in the northern parts of Scotland to signify fire. The *lowe*, for the blaze or flame of fire, is indeed in general use in Scotland.

but that he died in his bed. Thiodolf tells of it thus:— SAGA I.

“ Dyggve the Brave, the mighty king,  
It is no hidden secret thing,  
Has gone to meet a royal mate,  
Riding upon the horse of Fate.  
For Loke’s daughter\* in her house  
Of Ingve’s race would have a spouse ;  
Therefore the fell-one snatched away  
Brave Dyggve from the light of day.”

Dyggve’s mother was Drott, a daughter of King Daup, the son of Rig, who was first called king in the Danish tongue. His descendants always afterwards considered the title of king the title of highest dignity. Dyggve was the first of his family called king, for his predecessors had been called Drotti, and their wives Drottningr, and their court Drotr. Each of their race was called Yngva, or Ynguni, and the whole race together Ynglinger.† The Queen Drot was a sister of King Dan Mikillati, from whom Denmark took its name.

King Dyggve’s son, called Dag, succeeded to him, and was so wise a man that he understood the language of birds. He had a sparrow which told him much news, and flew to different countries. Once the sparrow flew to Reidgotaland‡, to a farm called

CHAPTER  
XXI.  
Of Dag  
the Wise.

\* Noke’s or Loke’s (the evil principle) daughter was Hæl, who received in the under world those who, not having fallen in battle, were not received by Odin in Valhalla. Our word “hell” is derived from the name of this goddess apparently.

† Is it possible that the Ingævones of Tacitus can have any relation to this tribe of Ynguni or Ingve? The passage, cap. 2., “De Moribus Germaniæ,” has a remarkable coincidence with the saga story of these Northmen. “Celebrant carminibus antiquis (quod unum apud illos memoriæ et annalium genus est) Tuisconem Deum, terra editum, et filium Mannum, originem gentis conditoresque. Manno tres filios e quorum nominibus proximi oceano Ingævones.” Here is a tribe of Ingæve deriving their origin from the gods, like the Ingve or Inguni of the saga.

‡ Reidgotaland is understood to mean Jutland, and Eygotaland the islands inhabited by the same people. It is by no means clear that these appellations of Gotlanders on the Baltic coast have any connection



## SAGA I.

Varva, where he flew into the peasant's corn-field and took his grain. The peasant came up, took a stone, and killed the sparrow. King Dag was ill pleased that the sparrow did not come home; and as he, in a sacrifice of expiation, inquired after the sparrow, he got the answer that it was killed at Varva. Thereupon he ordered a great army, and went to Gothland; and when he came to Varva he landed with his men and plundered, and the people fled away before him. King Dag returned in the evening to his ships, after having killed many people and taken many prisoners. As they were going across a river at a place called Skiotan's Ford, a labouring thrall came running to the river-side, and threw a hay-fork into their troop. It struck the king on the head, so that he fell instantly from his horse and died, and his men went back to Sweden. In those times the chief who ravaged a country was called Gram\*, and the men-at-arms under him Gramr. Thiodolf sings of it thus:—

“ What news is this that the king's men,  
 Flying eastward through the glen,  
 Report? That Dag the Brave, whose name  
 Is sounded far and wide by Fame,—  
 That Dag, who knew so well to wield  
 The battle-axe in bloody field,  
 Where brave men meet, no more will head  
 The brave—that mighty Dag is dead !

“ Varva was wasted with the sword,  
 And vengeance taken for the bird, —  
 The little bird that used to bring  
 News to the ear of the great king.

---

with the great population called the Goths, unless a fortuitous similarity of name and a common origin. That the vast hordes called Goths who overwhelmed Italy came from these Gothlands, it is inconsistent with common sense to suppose. The whole coasts of the Baltic could furnish no such masses of armed men now even, when they furnish more subsistence for man.

\* Gram is equivalent to grim, fierce.

Varva was ravaged, and the strife  
 Was ended when the monarch's life  
 Was ended too—the great Dag fell  
 By the hay-fork of a base thrall!”

SAGA I.  

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CHAPTER  
XXII.  
Of Agne.

Agne was the name of Dag's son, who was king after him,—a powerful and celebrated man, expert, and exercised in all feats. It happened one summer that King Agne went with his army to Finland, and landed and marauded. The Finland people gathered a large army, and proceeded to the strife under a chief called Froste. There was a great battle, in which King Agne gained the victory, and Froste fell there with a great many of his people. King Agne proceeded with armed hand through Finland, subdued it, and made enormous booty. He took Froste's daughter Skialf, and her brother Loge, and carried them along with him. When he sailed from the east he came to land at Stokkasund\*, and put up his tent on the flat side of the river, where then there was a wood. King Agne had at the time the gold ornament which had belonged to Visbur. He now married Skialf, and she begged him to make a burial feast in honour of her father. He invited a great many guests, and made a great feast. He had become very celebrated by his expedition, and there was a great drinking match. Now when King Dag had got drunk, Skialf bade him take care of his gold ornament which he had about his neck; therefore he took hold of the ornament, and bound it fast about his neck before he went to sleep. The land-tent stood at the wood side, and a high tree over the tent protected it against the heat of the sun. Now when King Agne was asleep, Skialf took a noose, and fastened it under the ornament. Thereupon her men threw down the tent-poles, cast the loop of the noose up in the branches of the tree,

\* Stokksund is the sound or stream at Stockholm, between the Mælare lake and the sea.



SAGA I.  

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and hauled upon it, so that the king was hanged close under the branches and died; and Skialf with her men ran down to their ships, and rowed away. King Agne was buried upon the spot, which was afterwards called Agnefit; and it lies on the east side of the Taurun, and west of Stokksund. Thiodolf speaks of it thus:—

“ How do ye like the high-souled maid,  
Who, with the grim Fate-goddess’ aid,  
Avenge her sire? — made Svithiod’s king  
Through air in golden halter swing?  
How do ye like her, Agne’s men?  
Think ye that any chief again  
Will court the fate your chief befell,  
To ride on wooden horse to hell?”

CHAPTER  
XXIII.  
Of Alric  
and Eric.

The sons of Agne were called Alric and Eric, and were kings together after him. They were powerful men, great warriors, and expert at all feats of arms. It was their custom to ride and break in horses both to walk and to gallop, which nobody understood so well as they; and they vied with each other who could ride best, and keep the best horses. It happened one day that both the brothers rode out together alone, and at a distance from their followers, with their best horses, and rode on to a field; but never came back. The people at last went out to look after them, and they were both found dead with their heads crushed. As they had no weapons, except it might be their horses’ bridles, people believed that they had killed each other with them. So says Thiodolf:—

“ Alric fell, by Eric slain,  
Eric’s life-blood dyed the plain.  
Brother fell by brother’s hand;  
And they tell it in the land,  
That they worked the wicked deed  
With the sharp bits that guide the steed.  
Shall it be said of Frey’s brave sons,  
The kingly race, the noble ones,  
That they have fought in deadly battle  
With the head-gear of their cattle?”

Alric's sons, Yngve and Alf, then succeeded to the kingly power in Sweden. Yngve was a great warrior, always victorious; handsome, expert in all exercises, strong and very sharp in battle, generous and full of mirth; so that he was both renowned and beloved. Alf was a silent, harsh, unfriendly man, and sat at home in the land, and never went out on war expeditions. His mother was called Dagrid, a daughter of King Dag the Great, from whom the family of Daglingers are descended. King Alf had a wife named Bera, who was the most agreeable of women, very brisk and gay. One autumn Yngve, Alric's son, had arrived at Upsal from a viking cruise by which he was become very celebrated. He often sat long in the evening at the drinking table; but Alf went willingly to bed very early. Queen Bera sat often till late in the evening, and she and Ynge conversed together for their amusement; but Alf soon told her that she should not sit up so late in the evening, but should go first to bed, so as not to waken him. She replied, that happy would be the woman who had Yngve instead of Alf for her husband; and as she often repeated the same, he became very angry. One evening Alf went into the hall, where Yngve and Bera sat on the high seat speaking to each other. Yngve had a short sword upon his knees, and the guests were so drunk that they did not observe the king's coming in. King Alf went straight to the high seat, drew a sword from under his cloak, and pierced his brother Yngve through and through. Yngve leaped up, drew his short sword, and gave Alf his death-wound; so that both fell dead on the floor. Alf and Yngve were buried under mounds in Fyrisvold.\* Thus tells Thiodolf of it:—

SAGA I.  
CHAPTER  
XXIV.  
Of Yngve  
and Alf.

\* Fyrisvellir are the plains around Upsal-water, on which there are many mounds or tumuli.



## SAGA I.

“ I tell you of a horrid thing,  
 A deed of dreadful note I sing, —  
 How by false Bera, wicked queen,  
 The murderous brother-hands were seen  
 Each raised against a brother's life ;  
 How wretched Alf with bloody knife  
 Gored Ingve's heart, and Ingve's blade  
 Alf on the bloody threshold laid.  
 Can men resist Fate's iron laws ?  
 They slew each other without cause.”

CHAPTER  
 XXV.  
 Of Hug-  
 leik.

Hugleik was the name of King Alf's son, who succeeded the two brothers in the kingdom of the Swedes, the sons of Yngve being still children. King Hugleik was no warrior, but sat quietly at home in his country. He was very rich, but had still more the reputation of being very greedy. He had at his court all sorts of players, who played on harps, fiddles, and viols ; and had with him magicians, and all sorts of witches. Hake and Hagberd were two brothers, very celebrated as sea-kings, who had a great force of men-at-arms. Sometimes they cruised in company, sometimes each for himself, and many warriors followed them both. King Hake came with his troops to Sweden against King Hugleik, who, on his side, collected a great army to oppose him. Two brothers came to his assistance, Svipdag and Geigad, both very celebrated men, and powerful combatants. King Hake had about him twelve champions, and among them Starkod the Old ; and King Hake himself was a murderous combatant. They met on Fyrisvold, and there was a great battle, in which King Hugleik's army was soon defeated. Then the combatants, Svipdag and Geigad, pressed forward manfully ; but Hake's champions went six against one, and they were both taken prisoners. Then King Hake penetrated within the shield-circle\* around King Hugleik, and killed him and two of his sons within it. After this the

\* A bulwark or covering of shields—the testudo of the Romans—seems always to have been formed round the king's person in battle.

Swedes fled; and King Hake subdued the country, and became king of Sweden. He then sat quietly at home for three years; but during that time his combatants went abroad on viking expeditions, and gathered property for themselves.

SAGA I.

Jorund and Eric, the sons of Yngve Alricson, lay all this time in their war-ships, and were great warriors. One summer they marauded in Denmark, where they met a King Gudlög, and had a battle with him, which ended in their clearing Gudlög's ship and taking him prisoner. They carried him to the land at Stromöness, and hanged him there, and afterwards his men raised a mound over him. So says Eyvind Skaldaspiller:—

CHAPTER  
XXVI.  
King  
Gudlög's  
death.

“ By the fierce East-kings\* cruel pride,  
Gudlög must on the wild horse ride —  
The wildest horse you e'er did see :  
'Tis Segur's steed — the gallows tree.  
At Stromoness the tree did grow,  
Where Gudlög's corpse waves on the bough.  
A high stone stands on Stromo's heath,  
To tell the gallant hero's death.”

The brothers Eric and Jorund became more celebrated by this deed, and appeared to be much greater men than before. When they heard that King Hake in Sweden had sent from him his champions, they steered towards Sweden, and gathered together a strong force. As soon as the Swedes heard that the Ynglingers were come to them, they flocked to the brothers in multitudes. The brothers proceeded up the Mælare lake, and advanced towards Upsal against King Hake, who came out against them on the Fyrisvold with far fewer people. There was a great battle, in which King Hake went forward so bravely that he killed all who were nearest to him, and at last killed King Eric, and cut down the banner of the two brothers. King Jorund with all his men fled to their

CHAPTER  
XXVII.  
Of King  
Hake.

\* The Swedish kings Jorund and Eric, of Yngve's race, are said to be of the East—as relative to Norway, from which Gudlög came.



SAGA I.

ships. King Hake had been so grievously wounded that he saw his days could not be long; so he ordered a war-ship which he had to be loaded with his dead men and their weapons, and to be taken out to the sea; the tiller to be shipped, and the sails hoisted. Then he set fire to some tar-wood, and ordered a pile to be made over it in the ship. Hake was almost if not quite dead, when he was laid upon this pile of his. The wind was blowing off the land,—the ship flew, burning in clear flame, out between the islets, and into the ocean. Great was the fame of this deed in after times.

CHAPTER  
XXVIII.  
Jorund's  
death.

Jorund, King Yngve's son, remained king at Upsal. He ruled the country; but was often, in summer, out on war expeditions. One summer he went with his forces to Denmark; and having plundered all around in Jutland, he went into Lymfiord in autumn, and marauded there also. While he was thus lying in Oddosund with his people, King Gylög of Halogaland, a son of King Gudlög, of whom mention is made before, came up with a great force, and gave battle to Jorund. When the country people saw this they swarmed from all parts towards the battle, in great ships and small; and Jorund was overpowered by the multitude, and his ships cleared of their men. He sprang overboard, but was made prisoner and carried to the land. Gylög ordered a gallows to be erected, led Jorund to it, and had him hanged there. So ended his life. Thiodolf talks of this event thus:—

“ Jorund has travelled far and wide,  
But the same horse he must bestride  
On which he made brave Gudlög ride.  
He too must for a necklace wear  
Hagbert's\* fell noose in middle air.  
The army leader thus must ride  
On Horva's† horse, at Limfiord's side.”

\* Hagbert's noose—the gallows rope by which Hagbert was hanged.

† Horva, a sea-king, whose name is given also to Odin by the scalds. Odin was the god of the hanged; and Odin's horse was a name for the gallows.

On or Ane was the name of Jorund's son, who became king of the Swedes after his father. He was a wise man, who made great sacrifices to the gods; but, being no warrior, he lived quietly at home. In the time when the kings we have been speaking of were in Upsal, Denmark had been ruled over by Dan Mikellati, who lived to a very great age; then by his son, Frode Mikellati, or the Peace-loving, who was succeeded by his sons Halfdan and Fridleif, who were great warriors. Halfdan was older than his brother, and above him in all things. He went with his army against King On to Sweden, and was always victorious. At last King On fled to Wester Gotland when he had been king in Upsal about twenty-five years, and was in Gotland twenty-five years, while Halfdan remained king in Upsal. King Halfdan died in his bed, and was buried there in a mound; and King On returned to Upsal when he was sixty years of age. He made a great sacrifice, and in it offered up his son to Odin. On got an answer from Odin, that he should live sixty years longer; and he was afterwards king in Upsal for twenty-five years. Now came Ole the Bold, a son of King Fridleif, with his army to Sweden, against King On, and they had several battles with each other; but Ole was always the victor. Then On fled a second time to Gotland; and for twenty-five years Ole reigned in Upsal, until he was killed by Starkad the Old. After Ole's fall, On returned to Upsal, and ruled the kingdom for twenty-five years. Then he made a great sacrifice again for long life, in which he sacrificed his second son, and received the answer from Odin, that he should live as long as he gave him one of his sons every tenth year, and also that he should name one of the districts of his country after the number of sons he should offer to Odin. When he had sacrificed the seventh of his sons he continued to live; but so that he could not walk, but

SAGA I.  
 CHAPTER  
 XXIX.  
 Of King  
 Ane's  
 death.



## SAGA I.

was carried on a chair. Then he sacrificed his eighth son, and lived thereafter ten years, lying in his bed. Now he sacrificed his ninth son, and lived ten years more; but so that he drank out of a horn like a weaned infant. He had now only one son remaining, whom he also wanted to sacrifice, and to give Odin Upsal and the domains thereunto belonging, under the name of the Ten Lands, but the Swedes would not allow it; so there was no sacrifice, and King On died, and was buried in a mound at Upsal. Since that time it is called On's sickness when a man dies, without pain, of extreme old age. Thiodolf tells of this:—

“ In Upsal's town the cruel king  
Slaughtered his sons at Odin's shrine —  
Slaughtered his sons with cruel knife,  
To get from Odin length of life.  
He lived until he had to turn  
His toothless mouth to the deer's horn ;  
And he who shed his children's blood  
Sucked through the ox's horn his food.  
At length fell Death has tracked him down,  
Slowly, but sure, in Upsal's town.”

CHAPTER  
XXX.  
Of Egil  
and Tunne.

Egil was the name of On the Old's son, who succeeded as king in Sweden after his father's death. He was no warrior, but sat quietly at home. Tunne was the name of a slave who had been the counsellor and treasurer of On the Old; and when On died Tunne took much treasure and buried it in the earth. Now when Egil became king he put Tunne among the other slaves, which he took very ill and ran away with others of the slaves. They dug up the treasures which Tunne had concealed, and he gave them to his men, and was made their chief. Afterwards many malefactors flocked to him; and they lay out in the woods, but sometimes fell upon the domains, pillaging and killing the people. When King Egil heard this, he went out with his forces to pursue them; but one night when he had taken up his night quarters, Tunne came there with his men, fell on the king's men unex-

pectedly, and killed many of them. As soon as King Egil perceived the tumult, he prepared for defence, and set up his banner; but many people deserted him, because Tunne and his men attacked them so boldly, and King Egil saw that nothing was left but to fly. Tunne pursued the fugitives into the forest, and then returned to the inhabited land, ravaging and plundering without resistance. All the goods that fell into Tunne's hands he gave to his people, and thus became popular and strong in men. King Egil assembled an army again, and hastened to give battle to Tunne. But Tunne was again victorious, and King Egil fled with the loss of many people. Egil and Tunne had eight battles with each other, and Tunne always gained the victory. Then King Egil fled out of the country, and went to Sealand in Denmark, to Frode the Bold, and promised him a scatt from the Swedes to obtain help. Frode gave him an army, and also his champions, with which force King Egil repaired to Sweden. When Tunne heard this he came out to meet him; and there was a great battle, in which Tunne fell, and King Egil recovered his kingdom, and the Danes returned home. King Egil sent King Frode great and good presents every year, but he paid no scatt to the Danes; but notwithstanding the friendship between Egil and Frode continued without interruption. After Tunne's fall, Egil ruled the kingdom for three years. It happened in Sweden that an old bull, which was destined for sacrifice, was fed so high that he became dangerous to people; and when they were going to lay hold of him he escaped into the woods, became furious, and was long in the forest committing great damage to the country. King Egil was a great hunter, and often rode into the forest to chase wild animals. Once he rode out with his men to hunt in the forest. The king had traced an animal a long while, and followed it in the forest,



## SAGA I.

separated from all his men. He observed at last that it was the bull, and rode up to it to kill it. The bull turned round suddenly, and the king struck him with his spear; but it tore itself out of the wound. The bull now struck his horn in the side of the horse, so that he instantly fell flat on the earth with the king. The king sprang up, and was drawing his sword, when the bull struck his horns right into the king's breast. The king's men then came up and killed the bull. The king lived but a short time, and was buried in a mound at Upsal. Thiodolf sings of it thus:—

“ The fair-haired son of Odin's race,  
 Who fled before fierce Tunne's face,  
 Has perished by the demon-beast  
 Who roams the forests of the East.  
 The hero's breast met the full brunt  
 Of the wild bull's shaggy front;  
 The hero's heart's asunder torn  
 By the fell Jotun's spear-like horn.”

CHAPTER  
 XXXI.  
 Of King  
 Ottar.

Ottar was the name of King Egil's son who succeeded to the domains and kingdom after him. He did not continue friendly with King Frode, and therefore King Frode sent messengers to King Ottar to demand the scatt which Egil had promised him. Ottar replied, that the Swedes had never paid scatt to the Danes, neither would he; and the messengers had to depart with this answer. Frode was a great warrior; and he came one summer with his army to Sweden, and landed and ravaged the country. He killed many people, took some prisoners, burned all around in the inhabited parts, made a great booty, and made great devastation. The next summer King Frode made an expedition to the eastward; and when King Ottar heard that Frode was not at home in his own country, he went on board his own ships, sailed over to Denmark, and ravaged there without opposition. As he heard that a great many people were collected at Sealand, he proceeds westward to the

Sound, and sails north about to Jutland; lands at Lymfiord; plunders the Vend district\*; burns, and lays waste, and makes desolate the country he goes over with his army. Vätte and Faste were the names of the earls whom Frode had appointed to defend the country in Denmark while he was abroad. When the earls heard that the Swedish king was laying waste Denmark, they collected an army, hastened on board their ships, and sailed by the south side to Lymfiord. They came unexpectedly upon Ottar, and the battle began immediately. The Swedes gave them a good reception, and many people fell on both sides; but as soon as men fell in the Danish army other men hastened from the country to fill their places, and also all the vessels in the neighbourhood joined them. The battle ended with the fall of Ottar and the greater part of his people. The Danes took his body, carried it to the land, laid it upon a mound of earth, and let the wild beasts and ravens tear it to pieces. Thereafter they made a figure of a crow out of wood, sent it to Sweden, and sent word with it that their king, Ottar, was no better than it; and from this he was called Ottar Vendelcrow. Thiodolf tells so of it:—

“ By Danish arms the hero bold,  
Ottar the Brave, lies stiff and cold.  
To Vendel’s plain the corpse was borne;  
By eagles’ claws the corpse is torn,  
Spattered by ravens’ bloody feet,  
The wild bird’s prey, the wild wolf’s meat.  
The Swedes have vowed revenge to take  
On Frode’s earls, for Ottar’s sake;  
Like dogs to kill them in their land,  
In their own homes, by Swedish hand.”

Adils was the name of King Ottar’s son and successor. He was a long time king, became very rich, and went also for several summers on viking expe-

CHAPTER  
XXXII.  
Of King  
Adils’ mar-  
riage.

\* Vendill, the part of Jutland north of Lymfiord.



## SAGA I.

ditions. On one of these he came to Saxonland with his troops. There a king was reigning called Geir-thiof, and his wife was called Alof the Great; but nothing is told of their children. The king was not at home, and Adils and his men ran up to the king's house and plundered it, while others drove a herd of cattle down to the strand.\* The herd was attended by slave-people, carls and girls, and they took all of them together. Among them was a remarkably beautiful girl called Yrsa. Adils returned home with this plunder. Yrsa was not one of the slave girls, and it was soon observed that she was intelligent, spoke well, and in all respects was well behaved. All people thought well of her, and particularly the king; and at last it came to so far that the king celebrated his wedding with her, and Yrsa became queen of Sweden, and was considered an excellent woman.

CHAPTER  
XXXIII.  
Of King  
Adils'  
death.

King Halfdan's son Helge ruled at that time over Leidre. He came to Sweden with so great an army, that King Adils saw no other way than to fly at once. King Helge landed with his army, plundered, and made a great booty. He took Queen Yrsa prisoner, carried her with him to Leidre, took her to wife, and had a son by her called Rolf Krake. When Rolf was three years old, Queen Alof came to Denmark, and told Queen Yrsa that her husband, King Helge, was her own father, and that she, Alof, was her mother. Thereupon Yrsa went back to Sweden to King Adils, and was queen there as long as she

\* The ordinary way, with the vikings, of victualling their ships, was driving cattle down to the strand and killing them, without regard to the property of friends or enemies; and this was so established a practice that it was expressed in a single word, "strandhug." King Harald Haarfager had prohibited the strandhug being committed in his own dominions by his own subjects on their viking cruises; and Rolf Ganger, the son of the Earl of Möre, having, notwithstanding, landed and made a strandhug in the South of Norway, where the king happened to be, was outlawed; and he in consequence set out on an expedition, in which he conquered and settled in Normandy.

lived. King Helge fell in a war expedition; and Rolf Krake, who was then eight years old, was taken to be king in Leidre. King Adils had many disputes with a king called Ali of the Uplands; and these kings had a battle on the ice of the Venner lake, in which King Ali fell, and King Adils won the battle. There is a long account of this battle in the *Skioldunga Saga*, and also about Rolf Krake's coming to Adils, and sowing gold upon the *Fyrisvold*. King Adils was a great lover of good horses, and had the best horses of these times. One of his horses was called *Slöngvir*, and another *Raven*. This horse he had taken from Ali on his death, and bred from him a horse, also called *Raven*, which the king sent in a present to King *Godgest* in *Halogaland*. When *Godgest* mounted the horse he was not able to manage him, and fell off, and was killed. This accident happened at *Omd* in *Halogaland*.\* King Adils was at a *Disa*† sacrifice; and as he rode around the *Disa* hall his horse *Raven* stumbled and fell, and the king was thrown forward upon his head, and his scull was split, and his brains dashed out against a stone. Adils died at *Upsal*, and was buried there in a mound. The Swedes called him a great king. *Thiodolf* speaks thus of him:—

“Witch-demons, I have heard men say,  
Have taken Adils' life away.  
The son of kings of Frey's great race,  
First in the fray, the fight, the chase,  
Fell from his steed—his clotted brains  
Lie mixed with mire on Upsal's plains.  
Such death (grim Fate has willed it so)  
Has struck down Ali's deadly foe.”

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\* *Halogaland* is the province of Norway now called *Nordland*, extending from the *Namsin* river north to *Westfiord*, where it joins the province of *Finmark*.

† *Disar* was the name given to the goddesses of the northern mythology; and *Disa* is supposed to have been *Freya*, in whose honour a great sacrifice, called *Disa Blot*, was held in mid-winter.



## SAGA I.

CHAPTER  
XXXIV.  
Rolf  
Krake's  
death.

Eystein, King Adils' son, ruled next over Sweden, and in his lifetime Rolf Krake of Leidre fell. In those days many kings, both Danes and Northmen, ravaged the Swedish dominions; for there were many sea-kings who ruled over many people, but had no lands, and he might well be called a sea-king who never slept beneath sooty roof-timbers.

CHAPTER  
XXXV.  
Of Eystein  
and the  
Jutland  
king Solve.

There was a sea-king called Solve, a son of Hogne of Niardö\*, who at that time plundered in the Baltic, but had his dominion in Jutland. He came with his forces to Sweden, just as King Eystein was at a feast in a district called Lofönd.† Solve came unexpectedly in the night on Eystein, surrounded the house in which the king was, and burned him and all his court. Then Solve went to Sigtun, and desired that the Swedes should receive him, and give him the title of king; but they collected an army, and tried to defend the country against him, on which there was a great battle, that lasted, according to report, eleven days. There King Solve was victorious, and was afterwards king of the Swedish dominions for a long time, until at last the Swedes betrayed him, and he was killed. Thiodolf tells of it thus:—

“ For a long time none could tell  
How Eystein died—but now I know  
That at Lofond the hero fell;  
The branch of Odin was laid low,  
Was burnt by Solve's Jutland men.  
The raging tree-devourer fire  
Rushed on the monarch in its ire;  
First fell the castle timbers, then  
The roof-beams—Eystein's funeral pyre.”

CHAPTER  
XXXVI.  
Of Yng-  
var's fall.

Yngvar, who was King Eystein's son, then became king of Sweden. He was a great warrior, and often lay out with his war-ships; for the Swedish dominions

\* Niardö, an island in North Drontheim district.

† Lofond, an isle in the Mælare lake, on which the palace of Drottningholm now stands.

were much ransacked then by Danes and East-country men. King Yngvar made a peace with the Danes; but betook himself to ravaging the East country in return. One summer he went with his forces to Esthonia, and plundered at a place called Stein. The Esthonians came down from the interior with a great army, and there was a battle; but the army of the country was so brave that the Swedes could not withstand them, and King Yngvar fell, and his people fled. He was buried close to the sea-shore under a mound, and after this defeat the Swedes returned home. Thiodolf sings of it thus:—

“ Certain it is the Esthland foe  
The fair-haired Swedish king laid low.  
On Esthland’s strand, o’er Swedish graves,  
The East Sea sings her song of waves;  
King Yngvar’s dirge is ocean’s roar  
Resounding on the rock-ribbed shore.”

Onund was the name of Yngvar’s son who succeeded him. In his days there was peace in Sweden, and he became rich in valuable goods. King Onund went with his army to Esthonia to avenge his father, and landed and ravaged the country round far and wide, and returned with a great booty in autumn to Sweden. In his time there were fruitful seasons in Sweden, so that he was one of the most popular of kings. Sweden is a great forest land, and there are such great uninhabited forests in it that it is a journey of many days to cross them. Onund bestowed great diligence and expense on clearing the woods and cultivating the cleared land. He made roads through the desert forests; and thus cleared land is found all through the forest country, and great districts are settled. In this way extensive tracts of land were brought into cultivation, for there were country people enough to cultivate the land. Onund had roads made through all Sweden, both through forests and mo-

CHAPTER  
XXXVII.  
Of Onund  
the Land-  
clearer.



SAGA I. — rasses, and also over mountains ; and he was therefore called Onund Roadmaker. He had a house built for himself in every district of Sweden, and went over the whole country in guest-quarters.\*

CHAPTER  
XXXVIII.  
Of Ingiald  
the Bad.

Onund had a son called Ingiald, and at that time Yngvar was king of the district of Fiadryndaland. Yngvar had two sons by his wife,—the one called Alf, the other Agnar,—who were about the same age as Ingiald. Onund's district-kings were at that time spread widely over Sweden, and Svipdag the Blind ruled over Fiundaland, in which Upsal is situated, and where all the Swedish Things are held. There also were held the mid-winter sacrifices, at which many kings attended. One year at mid-winter there was a great assembly of people at Upsal, and King Yngvar had also come there with his sons. Alf, King Yngvar's son, and Ingiald, King Onund's son, were there,—both about six years old. They amused themselves with child's play, in which each should be leading on his army. In their play Ingiald found himself not so strong as Alf, and was so vexed that he almost cried. His foster-brother Gautvid came up, led him to his foster-father Svipdag the Blind, and told him how ill it appeared that he was weaker and less manly than Alf, King Yngvar's son. Svipdag replied that it was a great shame. The day after Svipdag took the heart of a wolf, roasted it on the tongs, and gave it to the king's son Ingiald to eat, and from that time he became a most ferocious person, and of the worst disposition. When Ingiald was grown up, Onund applied for him to King Algaut for his daughter Gautheld. Algaut was a son of Gautrek

\* This continued to be the ordinary way of subsisting the kings and court in Norway for many generations. In Sweden the kings appear to have had a fixed residence at Upsal, and in Denmark at Leidre and Odinsö ; while in Norway they appear to have lived always in royal progresses through the districts in turns, without any palace, castle, or fixed abode.

the Mild, and grandson of Gaut; and from them Gothland\* took its name. King Algaut thought his daughter would be well married if she got King Onund's son, and if he had his father's disposition; so the girl was sent to Sweden, and King Ingiald celebrated his wedding with her in due time.

SAGA I.

King Onund one autumn, travelling between his mansion-houses, came over a road called Himmenheath, where there are some narrow mountain valleys, with high mountains on both sides. There was heavy rain at the time, and before there had been snow on the mountains. A landslip of clay and stones came down upon King Onund and his people, and there he met his death, and many with him.† So says Thiodolf; namely,—

CHAPTER  
XXXIX.  
Of King  
Onund's  
death.

“ We all have heard how Jonkur's‡ sons,  
Whom weapons could not touch, with stones  
Were stoned to death — in open day,  
King Onund died in the same way.  
Or else perhaps the wood-grown land,  
Which long had felt his conquering hand,  
Uprose at length in deadly strife,  
And pressed out Onund's hated life.”

Then Ingiald, King Onund's son, came to the kingdom. The Upsal kings were the highest in Sweden among the many district-kings who had been since the time that Odin was chief. The kings who resided at Upsal had been the supreme chiefs over the whole Swedish dominions until the death of Agne, when, as

CHAPTER  
XL.  
The burn-  
ing in  
Upsal.

\* This derivation of the name Gothland, given to the small kingdoms in Sweden called East and West Gothland, and the island of Gothland, from the name of a chief, does away with a great deal of absurd speculation that these small districts were the original seats of the mighty people called Goths who overwhelmed the Roman empire.

† It is said there is a mound, called Onund's Hog, in the barony of Siunde in Westmanland, where this accident occurred.

‡ Jonakur was a king in the Edda whose sons were stoned to death, because steel weapons could not wound them. The meaning is, that Onund was killed in the same way by stones—which the earth may have showered down upon him for his cutting down wood and improving land.



SAGA I.

before related, the kingdom came to be divided between brothers. After that time the dominions and kingly powers were spread among the branches of the family as these increased; but some kings cleared great tracts of forest-land, and settled them, and thereby increased their domains. Now when Ingiald took the dominions and the kingdom of his father, there were, as before said, many district-kings. King Ingiald ordered a great feast to be prepared in Upsal, and intended to enter at it on his heritage after King Onund his father. He had a large hall made ready for the occasion, — one not less, nor less sumptuous, than that of Upsal; and this hall was called the Seven Kings Hall, and in it were seven high seats for kings. Then King Ingiald sent men all through Sweden, and invited to his feast kings, earls, and other men of consequence. To this heir-feast came King Algaut, his father-in-law; Yngvar king of Fiadryndaland, with his two sons, Alf and Agnar; King Spossniall of Nerike; King Sighvat of Aattundaland: but Granmar king of Sondermanland did not come. Six kings were placed in the seats in the new hall; but one of the high seats which Ingiald had prepared was empty. All the persons who had come got places in the new hall; but to his own court, and the rest of his people, he had appointed places at Upsal. It was the custom at that time that he who gave an heirship-feast after kings or earls, and entered upon the heritage, should sit upon the footstool in front of the high seat, until the full bowl, which was called the Braga-bowl, was brought in. Then he should stand up, take the braga-bowl, make solemn vows to be afterwards fulfilled, and thereupon empty the bowl. Then he should ascend the high seat which his father had occupied; and thus he came to the full heritage after his father. Now it was done so on this occasion. When the full braga-bowl came in, King Ingiald stood up, grasped a large

bull's horn, and made a solemn vow to enlarge his dominions by one half, towards all the four corners of the world, or die; and thereupon pointed with the horn to the four quarters. Now when the guests had become drunk towards evening King Ingiald told Svipdag's sons, Folkvid and Hylvid, to arm themselves and their men, as had before been settled; and accordingly they went out, and came up to the new hall, and set fire to it. The hall was soon in a blaze, and the six kings, with all their people, were burned in it. Those who tried to come out were killed. Then King Ingiald laid all the dominions these kings had possessed under himself, and took scatt from them.

When King Granmar heard the news of this treachery, he thought the same lot awaited him if he did not take care. The same summer King Hiorvard, who was a son of Ylfing, came with his fleet to Sweden, and went into a fiord called Myrkva-fiord.\* When King Granmar heard this he sent a messenger to him to invite him and all his men to a feast. He accepted it willingly; for he had never committed waste in King Granmar's dominions. When he came to the feast he was gladly welcomed. In the evening, when the full bowls went round, as was the custom of kings when they were at home, or in the feasts they ordered to be made, they drank together, the man and woman with each other in pairs, and the rest of the company drank all round in one set. But it was the law among the vikings that all who were at the entertainment should drink together in one company all round. King Hiorvard's high seat was placed right opposite to King Granmar's high seat, and on the same bench sat all his men. King Granmar told his daughter Hildigunna, who was a remarkably beautiful girl, to make ready to carry ale to the vikings.

CHAPTER  
XLI.  
Of Hior-  
vard's mar-  
riage.

\* Now Morköfiord, in Sodermanland province.



## SAGA I.

Thereupon she took a silver goblet, filled it, bowed before King Hiorvard, and said, "Success to all Ylfingers: this cup to the memory of Rolf Krake,"—drank out the half, and handed the cup to King Hiorvard. He took the cup, and took her hand, and said she must sit beside him. She says, that is not viking fashion to drink two and two with women. Hiorvard replies, that it were better for him to make a change, and leave the viking law, and drink in company with her. Then Hildigunne sat down beside him, and both drank together, and spoke a great deal with each other during the evening. The next day, when King Granmar and Hiorvard met, Hiorvard spoke of his courtship, and asked to have Hildigunne in marriage. King Granmar laid this proposal before his wife Hilda, and before people of consequence, saying they would have great help and trust in Hiorvard; and all approved of it highly, and thought it very advisable. And the end was, that Hildigunne was promised to Hiorvard, and the wedding followed soon after; and King Hiorvard staid with King Granmar, who had no sons, to help him to defend his dominions.

CHAPTER  
XLII.  
War between  
Ingiald and  
Granmar  
and Hior-  
vard.

The same autumn King Ingiald collected a war-force, with which he intended to fall upon these two relations; but when they heard it they also collected a force, and Hogne, who ruled over East Gotland, together with his son Hildur, came to their assistance. Hogne was father of Hilda, who was married to King Granmar. King Ingiald landed with his army, which was by far the most numerous. A battle began, which was very sharp; but after it had lasted a short time, the chiefs who ruled over Fiadryndaland, West Gotland, Nerike, and Aatundaland, took to flight with all the men from those countries, and hastened to their ships. This placed King Ingiald in great danger, and he received many wounds, but escaped by flight

to his ships. Svipdag the Blind, Ingiald's foster-father, together with his sons, Gautvid and Hylvid, fell. Ingiald returned to Upsal, very ill satisfied with his expedition; and he thought the army levied from those countries he had acquired by conquest had been unfaithful to him. There was great hostility afterwards between King Ingiald and King Granmar, and his son-in-law King Hiorvard; and after this had continued a long time the friends of both parties brought about a reconciliation. The king appointed a meeting, and concluded a peace. This peace was to endure as long as the three kings lived, and this was confirmed by oath and promises of fidelity. The spring after King Granmar went to Upsal to make offering, as usual, for a steady peace. Then the foreboding turned out for him so that it did not promise him long life, and he returned to his dominions.

The autumn after, King Granmar and his son-in-law Hiorvard went to a feast at one of their farms in the island Sili.\* When they were at the entertainment, King Ingiald came there in the night with his troops, surrounded the house, and burnt them in it, with all their men. Then he took to himself all the country these kings had possessed, and placed chiefs over it. King Hogne and his son Hilder often made inroads on horseback into the Swedish dominions, and killed King Ingiald's men, whom he had placed over the kingdom which had belonged to their relation Granmar. This strife between King Ingiald and King Hogne continued for a long time; but King Hogne defended his kingdom against King Ingiald to his dying day. King Ingiald had two children by his wife; — the eldest called Aasa, the other Olaf. Gauthild, the wife of Ingiald, sent the boy to his foster-father Bove, in West Gotland, where he was

CHAPTER  
XLIII.  
Death of  
the kings  
Granmar  
and Hior-  
vard.

\* Now Sæla isle, in the Mælare lake.



## SAGA I.

brought up along with Savre, Bove's son, who had the surname of Flettir. It was a common saying that King Ingiald had killed twelve kings, and deceived them all under pretence of peace; therefore he was called Ingiald the Evil-adviser. He was king over the greater part of Sweden. He married his daughter Aasa to Gudrod king of Scania; and she was like her father in disposition. Aasa brought it about that Gudrod killed his brother Halfdan, father of Ivar Vidfadme; and also she brought about the death of her husband Gudrod, and then fled to her father; and she thus got the name also of Aasa the Evil-adviser.

CHAPTER  
XLIV.  
Of Ingiald  
the Bad's  
death.

Ivar Vidfadme came to Scania after the fall of his uncle Gudrod, and collected an army in all haste, and moved with it into Sweden. Aasa had gone to her father before. King Ingiald was at a feast in Ræning\*, when he heard that King Ivar's army was in the neighbourhood. Ingiald thought he had not strength to go into battle against Ivar, and he saw well that if he betook himself to flight his enemies would swarm around him from all corners. He and Aasa took a resolution which has become celebrated. They drank until all their people were dead drunk, and then put fire to the hall; and it was consumed, with all who were in it, including themselves, King Ingiald, and Aasa. Thus says Thiodolf:—

“ With fiery feet devouring flame  
Has hunted down a royal game  
At Ræning, where King Ingiald gave  
To all his men one glowing grave.  
On his own hearth the fire he raised,  
A deed his foemen even praised;  
By his own hand he perished so,  
And life for freedom did forego.”

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\* Ranninge, a village in Fogd isle, in the Mælare lake, is supposed to have been the Ræning of the saga. A large circle of stones, or a wall, remains, still called Ranningsborg, on a heath.

Ivar Vidfadme subdued the whole of Sweden. He brought in subjection to himself all the Danish dominions, a great deal of Saxonland, all the East country, and a fifth part of England. From his race the kings of Sweden and Denmark who have had the supreme authority in those countries, are descended. After Ingiald the Evil-adviser the Upsal dominion fell from the Yngve race, notwithstanding the length of time they could reckon up the series of their forefathers.

SAGA I.  
CHAPTER  
XLV.  
Of Ivar.

When Olaf, King Ingiald's son, heard of his father's end, he went, with the men who chose to follow him, to Nerike; for all the Swedish community rose with one accord to drive out Ingiald's family and all its friends. Now, when the Swedes got intelligence of him he could not remain there, but went on westwards, through the forest, to a river which comes from the north and falls into the Venner lake, and is called Klar River. There they sat themselves down, turned to, and cleared the woods, burnt, and then settled there. Soon there were great districts, which altogether were called Vermeland; and a good living was to be made there. Now when it was told of Olaf, in Sweden, that he was clearing the forests, they laughed at his proceedings, and called him the Tree-feller. Olaf got a wife called Solva, or Solveig, a daughter of Halfdan Guldtand, westward in Soloer Islands.\* Halfdan was a son of Solve Solvevesson, who was a son of Solve the Old, who first settled on these islands. Olaf Tree-feller's mother was called Gauthild, and her mother was Alofa, daughter of Olaf Skygne, king in Nerike. Olaf and Solva had two sons, Ingiald and Halfdan. Halfdan was brought up in Soloer Isles, in the house of his mother's brother Solve, and was called Halfdan Huitbein.

CHAPTER  
XLVI.  
Of Olaf  
the Tree-  
feller.

\* Soleyar was a district comprehending some of the continent, as well as the group of islands now called Soloer.



## SAGA I.

CHAPTER  
XLVII.  
Olaf the  
Tree-feller  
burned.

There were a great many people who fled the country from Sweden, on account of King Ivar; and when they heard that King Olaf had got good lands in Vermeland, so great a number came there to him that the land could not support them. Then there came dear times and famine, which they ascribed to their king; as the Swedes used always to reckon good or bad crops for or against their kings. The Swedes took it amiss that Olaf was sparing in his sacrifices, and believed the dear times must proceed from this cause. The Swedes therefore gathered together troops, made an expedition against King Olaf, surrounded his house, and burnt him in it, giving him to Odin as a sacrifice for good crops. This happened at the Venner lake. Thus tells Thiodolf of it:—

“ The temple wolf\*, by the lake shores,  
The corpse of Olaf now devours.  
The clearer of the forests† died  
At Odin’s shrine by the lake side.  
The glowing flames stripped to the skin  
The royal robes from the Swedes’ king.  
Thus Olaf, famed in days of yore,  
Vanished from earth at Venner’s shore.”

CHAPTER  
XLVIII.  
Halfdan  
Huitbein  
made king.

Those of the Swedes who had more understanding found that the dear times proceeded from there being a greater number of people on the land than it could support, and that the king could not be blamed for this. They took the resolution, therefore, to cross the Eida forest‡ with all their men, and came quite unexpectedly into Soloer, where they put to death King Solve, and took Halfdan Huitbein prisoner, and made him their chief, and gave him the title of king. Thereupon he subdued Soloer, and proceeding with his army into Raumarige, plundered there, and laid that district also in subjection by force of arms.

\* The temple wolf — the fire which devoured the body of Olaf.

† Olaf was called the Tree-feller.

‡ Eydiskogr, a great uninhabited forest, which then, and to a late period, covered the frontier of Norway towards Sweden on the south.

Halfdan Huitbein became a great king. He was married to Asa, a daughter of Eystein the Severe, who was king of the Upland people, and ruled over Hedemark. Halfdan and Asa had two sons, Eystein and Gudrod. Halfdan subdued a great part of Hedemark, Thoten, Hadeland, and much of Westfold.\* He lived to be an old man, and died in his bed at Thoten, from whence his body was transported to Westfold, and was buried under a mound at a place called Skærid, at Skiringsall.† So says Thiodolf:—

SAGA I.  
CHAPTER  
XLIX.  
Of Halfdan  
Huitbein.

“ Halfdan, esteemed by friends and foes,  
Receives at last life's deep repose :  
The aged man at last, though late,  
Yielded in Thoten to stern fate.  
At Skiringsal hangs o'er his grave  
A rock, that seems to mourn the brave.  
Halfdan, to chiefs and people dear,  
Received from all a silent tear.”

Ingiald, Halfdan's brother, was king of Værmeland; but after his death King Halfdan took possession of Værmeland, raised scatt from it, and placed earls over it as long as he lived.

CHAPTER  
L.  
Of Ingiald,  
brother of  
Halfdan.

Eystein, Halfdan Huitbein's son, became king after in Raumarige and Westfold. He was married to Hilde, a daughter of Eric Agnarson, who was king in Westfold. Agnar, Eric's father, was a son of Sigtryg,

CHAPTER  
LI.  
Of King  
Eystein's  
death.

\* Hedemark, Thoten, Hadeland, Westfold, and the Uplands or Highlands, are all districts in Norway, and in the south of Norway; except the Uplands, which apparently included the upper parts of the valleys of which the waters flow northwards from the dividing ridge, the Dovrefield.

† Skiringssalr is rather a place of note. It is called “Sciringshael” in the Voyage of Ottar of Halogaland, written by our King Alfred in the end of the 9th century, and the most learned antiquaries have been puzzled where to look for it. Scania, the neighbourhood of Stockholm, and even Prussia, have been considered the true locality of this ancient seat of trade. The Norwegian antiquary Jacob Aal, in his translation of Snorro, places Skiringssalr in Westfold, in Tiolling parish, in the bailiwick of Laurvig; and the situation, access, ancient names, and remains of tumuli around, make this the probable site of the merchant town of Sciringshael.



## SAGA I.

king in the Vend district. King Eric had no son, and died while King Halfdan Huitbein was still in life. The father and son, Halfdan and Eystein, then took possession of the whole of Westfold, which Eystein ruled over as long as he lived. At that time there lived at Varna a king called Skiold, who was a great warlock. King Eystein went with some ships of war to Varna, plundered there, and carried away all he could find of clothes or other valuables, and of peasants' stock, and killed cattle on the strand for provision, and then went off. King Skiold came to the strand with his army, just as Eystein was at such a distance over the fiord that King Skiold could only see his sails. Then he took his cloak, waved it, and blew into it. King Eystein was sitting at the helm as they sailed within the Earl Isles, and another ship was sailing at the side of his, when there came a stroke of a wave, by which the boom of the other ship struck the king and threw him overboard, which proved his death. His men fished up his body, and it was carried into Borre, where a mound was thrown up over it, upon a cleared field out towards the sea at Vodle.\* So says Thiodolf:—

“ King Eystein sat upon the poop  
 Of his good ship : with sudden swoop  
 The swinging boom dashed him to hell,  
 And fathoms deep the hero fell  
 Beneath the brine. The fury whirl  
 Of Lokke†, Tempest's brother's girl,  
 Grim Hæle, clutched his soul away ;  
 And now where Vodle's ocean bay  
 Receives the ice-cold stream, the grave  
 Of Eystein stands,—the good, the brave ! ”

---

\* Now the farm Vold, on which the mounds of Eystein and his son Halfdan and others still remain. It adjoins Borre, about six miles from Tunsberg.

† Lokke (the evil principle) was brother of Bileister, the god of tempests ; and Lokke's daughter was Hæle, — from which probably our word Hell, the abode of evil spirits, is derived.

Halfdan was the name of King Eystein's son who succeeded him. He was called Halfdan the Mild, but the Bad Entertainer; that is to say, he was reported to be generous, and to give his men as much gold as other kings gave of silver, but he starved them in their diet. He was a great warrior, who had been long on viking cruises, and had collected great property. He was married to Hlif, a daughter of King Dag of Westmor. Holtar, in Westfold, was his chief house; and he died there on the bed of sickness, and was buried at Borre under a mound. So says Thiodolf:—

SAGA I.  
CHAPTER  
LII.  
Of Half-  
dan the  
Mild.

“ By Hæle's summons, a great king  
Was called away to Odin's Thing:  
King Halfdan, he who dwelt of late  
At Holtar, must obey grim Fate.  
At Borre, in the royal mound,  
They laid the hero in the ground.”

Gudrod, Halfdan's son, succeeded. He was called Gudrod the Magnificent, and also Gudrod the Hunter. He was married to Alfild, a daughter of King Alfarin of Alfheim, and got with her half the district of Vingulmark. Their son Olaf was afterwards called Geirstad-Alf. Alfheim, at that time, was the name of the land between the Glommen and Gotha rivers. Now when Alfild died, King Gudrod sent his men west to Agder to the king who ruled there, and who was called Harald Redbeard. They were to make proposals to his daughter Aasa upon the king's account; but Harald declined the match, and the ambassadors returned to the king, and told him the result of their errand. Soon after King Gudrod hove down his ships into the water, and proceeded with a great force in them to Agder. He immediately landed, and came altogether unexpectedly, at night, to King Harald's house. When Harald was aware that an army was at hand, he went out with the men

CHAPTER  
LIII.  
Of Gudrod  
the Hunter.



## SAGA I.

he had about him, and there was a great battle, although he wanted men so much. King Harald and his son Gyrder fell, and King Gudrod took a great booty. He carried away with him Aasa, King Harald's daughter, and had a wedding with her. They had a son by their marriage called Halfdan; and the autumn that Halfdan was a year old Gudrod went upon a round of feasts. He lay with his ship in Stifflesund, where they had been drinking hard, so that the king was very tipsy. In the evening, about dark, the king left the ship; and when he had got to the end of the gangway from the ship to the shore\*, a man ran against him, thrust a spear through him, and killed him. The man was instantly put to death, and in the morning when it was light the man was discovered to be Aasa's footboy: nor did she conceal that it was done by her orders. Thus tells Thiodolf of it:—

“ Gudrod is gone to his long rest,  
 Despite of all his haughty pride,—  
 A traitor's spear has pierced his side:  
 For Aasa cherished in her breast  
 Revenge; and as, by wine opprest,  
 The hero staggered from his ship,  
 The cruel queen her thrall let slip  
 To do the deed of which I sing:  
 And now the far-descended king,  
 At Stifflesund, in the old bed  
 Of the old Gudrod race, lies dead.”

CHAPTER  
 LIV.  
 Of King  
 Olaf's  
 death.

Olaf came to the kingdom after his father. He was a great warrior, and an able man; and was besides remarkably handsome, very strong, and large of growth. He had Westfold; for King Alfgeir took all Vingulmark to himself, and placed his son Gandalf over it. Both father and son made war on Raumarige, and subdued the greater part of that land and dis-

\* The ships appear generally to have been laid all night close to or at the shore, with a gangway to land by; and the crew appear to have had tents on shore to pass the night in.

trict. Hogne was the name of a son of the Upland king, Eystein the Great, who subdued for himself the whole of Hedemark, Thoten, and Hadeland. Then Værmeland fell off from Gudrod's sons, and turned itself, with its payment of scatt, to the Swedish king. Olaf was about twenty years old when Gudrod died; and as his brother Halfdan now had the kingdom with him, they divided it between them; so that Olaf got the eastern, and Halfdan the southern part. King Olaf had his main residence at Gairstad.\* There he died of a disease in his foot, and was laid under a mound at Gairstad. So sings Thiodolf:—

“ Long while this branch of Odin's stem  
Was the stout prop of Norway's realm ;  
Long while King Olaf with just pride  
Ruled over Westfold far and wide.  
At length by cruel gout oppressed,  
The good King Olaf sank to rest :  
His body now lies under ground,  
Buried at Gierstad, in the mound.”

Rognvald was the name of Olaf's son who was king of Westfold after his father. He was called “ Mountain-high,” and Thiodolf of Huina composed for him the “ Ynglinga-tal †;” in which he says —

CHAPTER  
LV.  
Of Rogn-  
vald the  
Mountain-  
high.

“ Under the heaven's blue dome, a name  
I never knew more true to fame  
Than Rognvald bore ; whose skilful hand  
Could tame the scorners of the land, —  
Rognvald, who knew so well to guide  
The wild sea-horses ‡ through the tide :  
The ‘ Mountain-high ’ was the proud name  
By which the king was known to fame.”

---

\* Geirstadir. This ancient seat of royalty in small is now supposed to have been a farm called Gierrestad, in the same parish, Tiolling, in which Skiringssalr was situated.

† Ynglinga-tal — the succession of the Yngling race. Our word Tale applied to numbers, as things told over one by one, appears connected with this word.

‡ The wild sea-horses — ships, which are generally called the horses of the ocean in scaldic poetry.



## II.

## SAGA II.

## HALFDAN THE BLACK'S SAGA.\*

CHAPTER  
I.  
Halfdan  
fights with  
Gandalf  
and Sig-  
tryg.

HALFDAN was a year old when his father was killed, and his mother Aasa set off immediately with him westwards to Agder, and set herself there in the kingdom which her father Harald had possessed. Halfdan grew up there, and soon became stout and strong; and, by reason of his black hair, was called Halfdan the Black. When he was eighteen years old he took his kingdom in Agder, and went immediately to Westfold, where he divided that kingdom, as before related, with his brother Olaf. The same autumn he went with an army to Vingulmark against King Gandalf. They had many battles, and sometimes one, sometimes the other gained the victory; but at last they agreed that Halfdan should have half of Vingulmark, as his father Gudrod had had it before. Then King Halfdan proceeded to Raumarige, and subdued it. King Sigtryg, son of King Eystein, who then had his residence in Hedemark, and who had

\* Halfdan the Black reigned from about the year 841 to about 863. In the preceding Saga of the Yngling race, there are but few points to be fixed down as historical by dates and coincidences with other history; and the earlier part of it belongs to mythology, not to history. Facts there are—we hold them to be facts only because they are not extravagant enough to be fables—intermingled with the mythological accounts of Odin and his times; but Snorro with great judgment goes over this period rapidly, and comes as quickly as possible to the period when authentic history begins to dawn,—to the reigns of Halfdan and Harald Haarfager. Their royal derivation from the Yngve race (the Ynglingens) could not be omitted; but Snorro hastens over it, as only a necessary preface to his more authentic narratives.

subdued Raumarige before, having heard of this, came out with his army against King Halfdan, and there was a great battle, in which King Halfdan was victorious; and just as King Sigtryg and his troops were turning about to fly, an arrow struck him under the left arm, and he fell dead. Halfdan then laid the whole of Raumarige under his power. King Eystein's second son, King Sigtryg's brother, was also called Eystein, and was then king in Hedemark. As soon as Halfdan had returned to Westfold, King Eystein went out with his army to Raumarige, and laid the whole country in subjection to him.

When King Halfdan heard of these disturbances in Raumarige, he again gathered his army together; and went out against King Eystein. A battle took place between them, and Halfdan gained the victory, and Eystein fled up to Hedemark, pursued by Halfdan. Another battle took place, in which Halfdan was again victorious; and Eystein fled northwards, up the valley to the Herse\* Gudbrand. There he was strengthened with new people, and in winter he went towards Hedemark, and met Halfdan the Black upon a large island which lies in the Myosen lake. There a great battle was fought, and many people on both sides were slain, but Halfdan won the victory. There fell Guttorm, the son of the Herse Gudbrand, who was one of the finest men in the Uplands. Then Eystein fled north up the valley, and sent his relation Halvard Skalk to King Halfdan to beg for peace. On consideration of their relationship, King Halfdan gave King Eystein half of Hedemark, which he and his relations had held before; but kept to himself Thoten, and the land so called. He likewise appropriated to himself

CHAPTER  
II.  
Battle be-  
tween  
Halfdan  
and  
Eystein.

\* Herser, syr, ser, appear words of a common origin, expressing no rank or office, — like earl, baron, lenderman, — but the social distinction given to persons of consideration and influence.



## SAGA II.

Hadeland ; and he plundered far and wide around, and was become a mighty king.

CHAPTER  
III.  
Halfdan's  
marriage.

Halfdan the Black got a wife called Ragnhild, a daughter of Harald Goldbeard, who was a king in Sogn. They had a son, to whom Harald gave his own name ; and the boy was brought up in Sogn, by his mother's father, King Harald. Now when this Harald had lived out his days nearly, and was become weak, having no son, he gave his dominions to his daughter's son Harald, and gave him his title of king ; and he died soon after. The same winter his daughter Ragnhild died ; and the following spring the young Harald fell sick, and died at ten years of age. As soon as Halfdan the Black heard of his son's death, he took the road northwards to Sogn with a great force, and was well received. He claimed the heritage and dominion after his son ; and no opposition being made, he took the whole kingdom. Earl Atle the Small, who was a friend of King Halfdan, came to him from Gaular ; and the king set him over the Sogn district, to judge in the country according to the country's laws, and collect scatt upon the king's account. Thereafter King Halfdan proceeded to his kingdom in the Up-lands.

CHAPTER  
IV.  
Halfdan's  
strife with  
Gandalf's  
sons.

In autumn, King Halfdan proceeded to Vingulmark. One night when he was there in guest quarters, it happened that about midnight a man came to him who had been on the watch on horseback, and told him a war force was come near to the house. The king instantly got up, ordered his men to arm themselves, and went out of the house and drew them up in battle order. At the same moment, Gandalf's sons, Hysing and Helsing, made their appearance with a large army. There was a great battle ; but Halfdan being overpowered by the numbers of people, fled to the forest, leaving many of his men on this spot. His foster-father, Olver the Wise,

fell here. The people now came in swarms to King Halfdan, and he advanced to seek Gandalf's sons. They met on the neck of land at Eyne, and fought there. Hysing and Helsing fell, and their brother Hake saved himself by flight. King Halfdan then took possession of the whole of Vingulmark, and Hake fled to Alfheim.

SAGA II.

Sigurd Hiort was the name of a king in Ringerige, who was stouter and stronger than any other man, and his equal could not be seen for a handsome appearance. His father was Helge the Sharp; and his mother was Aslaug, a daughter of Sigurd the Worm-eyed. It is told of Sigurd, that when he was only twelve years old he killed in single combat the Bersærker Hildebrand, and eleven others of his comrades; and many are the deeds of manhood told of him in a long saga about his feats. Sigurd had two children, one of whom was a daughter, called Ragnhild, then twenty years of age, and an excellent brisk girl. Her brother Guttorm was a youth. It is related that Sigurd had a custom of riding out quite alone in the uninhabited forest to hunt the wild beasts that are hurtful to man, and he was always very eager at this sport. One day he rode out into the forest as usual, and when he had ridden a long way he came out at a piece of cleared land near to Hadeland. There the Bersærker Hake came against him with thirty men, and they fought. Sigurd Hiort fell there, after killing twelve of Hake's men; and Hake himself lost one hand, and had three other wounds. Then Hake and his men rode to Sigurd's house, where they took his daughter Ragnhild and her brother Guttorm, and carried them, with much property and valuable articles, home to Hadeland, where Hake had many great farms. He ordered a feast to be prepared, intending to hold his wedding with Ragnhild; but the time passed on account of his wounds, which healed

CHAPTER  
V.  
King Half-  
dan's last  
marriage  
with  
Sigurd  
Hiort's  
daughter.



## SAGA II.

slowly; and the Bersærker Hake of Hadeland had to keep his bed, on account of his wounds, all the autumn and beginning of winter. Now King Halfdan was in Hedemark at the Yule entertainments when he heard this news; and one morning early, when the king was dressed, he called to him Harek Gand, and told him to go over to Hadeland, and bring him Ragnhild, Sigurd Hiort's daughter. Harek got ready with a hundred men, and made his journey so that they came over the lake to Hake's house in the grey of the morning, and beset all the doors and stairs of the places where the house-servants slept. Then they broke into the sleeping-room where Hake slept, took Ragnhild, with her brother Guttorm, and all the goods that were there, and set fire to the house-servants' place, and burnt all the people in it. Then they covered over a magnificent waggon, placed Ragnhild and Guttorm in it, and drove down upon the ice. Hake got up and went after them a while; but when he came to the ice on the lake, he turned his sword-hilt to the ground and let himself fall upon the point, so that the sword went through him. He was buried under a mound on the banks of the lake. When King Halfdan, who was very quick of sight, saw the party returning over the frozen lake, and with a covered waggon, he knew that their errand was accomplished according to his desire. Thereupon he ordered the tables to be set out, and sent people all round in the neighbourhood to invite plenty of guests; and the same day there was a good feast which was also Halfdan's marriage-feast with Ragnhild, who became a great queen. Ragnhild's mother was Thyрни, a daughter of Harald Klak, king in Jutland, and a sister of Thyri Dannebod, who was married to the Danish king, Gorm the Old, who then ruled over the Danish dominions.

Ragnhild, who was wise and intelligent, dreamt great dreams. She dreamt, for one, that she was standing out in her herb-garden, and she took a thorn out of her shift; but while she was holding the thorn in her hand it grew so that it became a great tree, one end of which struck itself down into the earth, and it became firmly rooted; and the other end of the tree raised itself so high in the air that she could scarcely see over it, and it became also wonderfully thick. The under part of the tree was red with blood, but the stem upwards was beautifully green, and the branches white as snow. There were many and great limbs to the tree, some high up, others low down; and so vast was the tree's foliage that it seemed to her to cover all Norway, and even much more.

SAGA II.  
CHAPTER  
VI.  
Of Ragn-  
hild's  
dream.

King Halfdan never had dreams, which appeared to him an extraordinary circumstance; and he told it to a man called Thorliuf the Wise, and asked him what his advice was about it. Thorliuf said that what he himself did, when he wanted to have any revelation by dream, was to take his sleep in a swine-stye, and then it never failed that he had dreams. The king did so, and the following dream was revealed to him. He thought he had the most beautiful hair, which was all in ringlets; some so long as to fall upon the ground, some reaching to the middle of his legs, some to his knees, some to his loins or the middle of his sides, some to his neck, and some were only as knots springing from his head. These ringlets were of various colours; but one ringlet surpassed all the others in beauty, lustre, and size. This dream he told to Thorliuf, who interpreted it thus:—There should be a great posterity from him, and his descendants should rule over countries with great, but not all with equally great honour; but one of his race should be more celebrated than all the others. It was the opinion

CHAPTER  
VII.  
Of Half-  
dan's  
dream.



SAGA II. of people that this ringlet betokened King Olaf the Saint.

King Halfdan was a wise man, a man of truth and uprightness—who made laws, observed them himself, and obliged others to observe them. And that violence should not come in place of the laws, he himself fixed the number of criminal acts in law, and the compensations, mulcts, or penalties, for each case, according to every one's birth and dignity.\*

Queen Ragnhild gave birth to a son, and water was poured over him, and the name of Harald given him, and he soon grew stout and remarkably handsome. As he grew up he became very expert at all feats, and showed also a good understanding. He was much beloved by his mother, but less so by his father.

CHAPTER  
VIII.  
Halfdan's  
meat vanishes at a  
feast.

King Halfdan was at a Yule-feast in Hadeland, where a wonderful thing happened one Yule† evening. When the great number of guests assembled were going to sit down to table, all the meat and all liquors disappeared from the table. The king sat alone very

\* The penalty, compensation, or manbod for every injury, due to the party injured, or to his family and next of kin if the injury was the death or premeditated murder of the party, appears to have been fixed for every rank and condition, from the murder of the king down to the maiming or beating a man's cattle or his slave. A man for whom no compensation was due was a dishonoured person, or an outlaw. It appears to have been optional with the injured party, or his kin if he had been killed, to take the mulct or compensation, or to refuse it, and wait an opportunity of taking vengeance for the injury on the party who inflicted it, or on his kin. A part of each mulct or compensation was due to the king; and these fines or penalties appear to have constituted a great proportion of the king's revenues, and to have been settled in the Things held in every district for administering the law with the lagman.

† The feast of Jiolner, one of the names of Thor, was celebrated by the pagan Northmen in mid-winter; and the name of Yule and the festivity were made to coincide with the Christmas of the church of Rome, which is called Yule all over the North, from Jiolner. In Scotland, as well as in Scandinavia, Yule is the name given to the Christmas holidays.

SAGA II.  

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confused in mind; all the others set off, each to his home, in consternation. That the king might come to some certainty about what had occasioned this event, he ordered a Laplander to be seized who was particularly knowing, and tried to force him to disclose the truth; but however much he tortured the man, he got nothing out of him. The Laplander sought help particularly from Harald, the king's son; and Harald begged for mercy for him, but in vain. Then Harald let him escape against the king's will, and accompanied the man himself. On their journey they came to a place where the man's chief had a great feast, and it appears they were well received there. When they had been there until spring, the chief said, "Thy father took it much amiss that in winter I took some provisions from him,—now I will repay it to thee by a joyful piece of news: thy father is dead; and now thou shalt return home, and take possession of the whole kingdom which he had, and with it thou shalt lay the whole kingdom of Norway under thee."

Halfdan the Black was driving from a feast in Hadeland, and it so happened that his road lay over the lake called Rönd.\* It was in spring, and there was a great thaw. They drove across the bight called Rykensvig, where in winter there had been a pond broken in the ice for cattle to drink at, and where the dung had fallen upon the ice the thaw had eaten it into holes. Now as the king drove over it the ice broke, and King Halfdan and many with him perished. He was then forty years old. He had been one of the most fortunate kings in respect of good seasons. The people thought so much of him, that when his death was known, and his body was floated to Ringerige to bury it there, the people of most consequence from

CHAPTER  
IX.  
Halfdan's  
death.

\* The lake now called Rands-fiord; and the bight called Rekonsvig is at a farm called Röken.



SAGA II.  

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Raumarige, Westfold, and Hedemark, came to meet it. All desired to take the body with them to bury it in their own district, and they thought that those who got it would have good crops to expect. At last it was agreed to divide the body into four parts. The head was laid in a mound at Stein in Ringerige, and each of the others took his part home and laid it in a mound ; and these have since been called Halfdan's Mounds.

## III.

## HARALD HAARFAGER'S SAGA.\*

SAGA III.

CHAPTER  
I.Harald's  
strife with  
Hako and  
his father  
Gandalf.

HARALD was but ten years old when he succeeded his father (Halfdan the Black). He became a stout, strong, and comely man, and withal prudent and manly. His mother's brother, Guttorm, was regent over the court and country, and commander of the men-at-arms of the court.† After Halfdan the Black's death, many chiefs coveted the dominions he had left. Among these King Gandalf was the first; then Hogne and Frode, sons of Eystein, king of Hedemark; and also Hogne Karason came from Ringerige. Hako, the son of Gandalf, began with an expedition of 300 men against Westfold, marched round the head of and over some valleys, and expected to come suddenly upon King Harald; while his father Gandalf sat at home with his army, and prepared to cross over the fiord into Westfold. When Guttorm heard of this he gathered an army, and marched up the country with King Harald against Hako. They met

\* Harald Haarfager reigned from about the year 861 to about the year 931. Pinkerton thinks Torfæus dates his reign thirty years too far back, and that Harald Haarfager's reign began in 900 or 910. As he agrees, however, in placing his death in 931 or 936, the only difference between the two antiquaries is, that Torfæus begins to reckon Harald's reign from his father's death, and Pinkerton from the subjugation of the small kings, by which he became sole king of Norway.

† A court or *herd* about the king's person were men-at-arms of the court or herd, kept in pay, and holding guard by night, even on horseback (see Chapter 4. of the preceding Saga); and appear to have been an establishment coeval with the kingly power itself. This kind of paid standing army must have existed from the earliest period, where no feudal rights over vassals or retainers could give the king or his nobles a constant command of armed followers.



## SAGA III.

in a valley, in which they fought a great battle, and King Harald was victorious; and there fell King Hako and most of his people. The place has since been called Hakodale. Then King Harald and Guttorm turned back, but they found King Gandalf had come to Westfold. The two armies marched against each other, and met, and had a great battle; and it ended in King Gandalf flying, after leaving most of his men dead on the spot, and in that state he came back to his kingdom. Now when the sons of King Eystein in Hedemark heard the news, they expected the war would come upon them, and they sent a message to Hogne Karason and to Herse Gudbrand, and appointed a meeting with them at Ringsager in Hedemark.

CHAPTER  
II.  
King Harald over-comes five kings.

After the battle King Harald and Guttorm turned back, and went with all the men they could gather through the forests towards the Uplands. They found out where the Upland kings had appointed their meeting-place, and came there about the time of midnight, without the watchmen observing them until their army was before the door of the house in which Hogne Karason was, as well as that in which Gudbrand slept. They set fire to both houses; but King Eystein's two sons slipped out with their men, and fought for a while, until both Hogne and Frode fell. After the fall of these four chiefs, King Harald, by his relation Guttorm's success and power, subdued Hedemark, Ringerige, Gudbrandsdal, Hadeland, Thoten, Raumarige, and the whole northern part of Vingulmark. King Harald and Guttorm had thereafter war with King Gandulf, and fought several battles with him; and in the last of them King Gandalf was slain, and King Harald took the whole of his kingdom as far south as the Glommen.

CHAPTER  
III.  
Of Gyda, daughter of Eric.

King Harald sent his men to a girl called Gyda, a daughter of King Eric of Hordaland, who was brought up as foster-child in the house of a great bonder in

SAGA III.

Valders. The king wanted her for his concubine; for she was a remarkably handsome girl, but of high spirit withal. Now when the messengers came there, and delivered their errand to the girl, she answered, that she would not throw herself away even to take a king for her husband, who had no greater kingdom to rule over than a few districts. "And methinks," said she, "it is wonderful that no king here in Norway will make the whole country subject to him, in the same way as Gorm the Old did in Denmark, or Eric at Upsal." The messengers thought her answer was dreadfully haughty, and asked what she thought would come of such an answer; for Harald was so mighty a man, that his invitation was good enough for her. But although she had replied to their errand differently from what they wished, they saw no chance, on this occasion, of taking her with them against her will; so they prepared to return. When they were ready, and the people followed them out, Gyde said to the messengers, "Now tell to King Harald these my words, — I will only agree to be his lawful wife upon the condition that he shall first, for my sake, subject to himself the whole of Norway, so that he may rule over that kingdom as freely and fully as King Eric over the Swedish dominions, or King Gorm over Denmark; for only then, methinks, can he be called the king of a people."

Now came the messengers back to King Harald, bringing him the words of the girl, and saying she was so bold and foolish that she well deserved that the king should send a greater troop of people for her, and inflict on her some disgrace. Then answered the king, "This girl has not spoken or done so much amiss that she should be punished, but rather she should be thanked for her words. She has reminded me," said he, "of something which it appears to me wonderful I did not think of before. And now," added

CHAPTER  
IV.  
King Ha-  
rald's vow.



## SAGA III.

he, "I make the solemn vow, and take God to witness, who made me\*, and rules over all things, that never shall I clip or comb my hair until I have subdued the whole of Norway, with scatt†, and duties, and domains; or if not, have died in the attempt." Guttorm thanked the king warmly for his vow; adding, that it was royal work to fulfil royal words.

CHAPTER  
V.  
The battle  
in Orkadal.

After this the two relations gather together a great force, and prepare for an expedition to the Uplands, and northwards up the valley (Gudbrandsdal), and north over Dovrefielde; and when the king came down to the inhabited land he ordered all the men to be killed, and every thing wide around to be delivered to the flames. And when the people came to know this, they fled every one where he could; some down the country to Orkadal, some to Gaulerdal, some to the forests. But some begged for peace, and obtained it, on condition of joining the king and becoming his men. He met no opposition until he came to Orkadal. There a crowd of people had assembled, and he had his first battle with a king called Gryting. Harald won the victory, and King Gryting was made prisoner, and most of his people killed. He took service himself under the king, and swore fidelity to him. Thereafter all the people in Orkadal district went under King Harald, and became his men.

CHAPTER  
VI.  
Of King  
Harald's  
laws for  
land pro-  
perty.

King Harald made this law over all the lands he conquered, that all the udal property should belong to him; and that the bonders, both great and small,

\* This appears a Christian interpolation; at least we find no such vows among the other saga heroes of the Odin religion.

† Scatt was a land-tax, paid to the king in money, malt, meal, or flesh-meat, from all lands; and was adjudged by the Thing to each king upon his accession, and being proposed and accepted as king.

In Orkney, where the land in general has been feudalised since the annexation in 1463 of the islands to the Scotch crown, the old udal tax of scatt remains as an item in the feu-duties payable to the crown.

SAGA III.

should pay him land dues for their possessions.\* Over every district he set an earl to judge according to the law of the land and to justice, and also to collect the land dues and the fines; and for this each earl received a third part of the dues, and services, and fines, for the support of his table and other expenses. Each earl had under him four or more hersers, each of whom had an estate of twenty merks yearly income bestowed on him and was bound to support twenty men-at-arms, and the earl sixty men, at their own expenses. The king had increased the land dues and burdens so much, that each of his earls had greater power and income than the kings had before; and when that became known at Drontheim, many great men joined the king, and took his service.

CHAPTER  
VII.  
Battle in  
Gaulerdal.

It is told that Earl Hakon Griotgardsson came to King Harald from Orland, and brought a great crowd of men to his service. Then King Harald went into Gaulerdal, and had a great battle, in which he slew two kings, and conquered their dominions; and these were Gaulerdal district and Strind district. He gave Earl Hakon Strind district to rule over as earl. King Harald then proceeded to Stordal, and had a third battle, in which he gained the victory, and took that district also. Thereupon the Drontheim people assembled, and four kings met together with their troops. The one ruled over Værdal†, the second over Skogn, the third over Sparbu, and the fourth over Inderoen; and this latter had also Eyna district. These four kings marched with their men against King Harald, but he won the battle; and some of these kings fell, and some fled. In all, King Harald fought at the least eight battles, and slew eight kings,

\* This appears to have been an attempt to introduce the feudal system.

† Værdal, Skogn, Sparbu, Inderoen, are small districts or parishes on the side of the Drontheim fiord.



## SAGA III.

in the land of Drontheim, and laid the whole of it under him.

## CHAPTER

## VIII.

King Harald seizes all Numedal district.

North in Numedal were two brothers, kings, — Herlaug and Hrollaug; and they had been for three summers raising a mound or tomb of stone and lime and of wood. Just as the work was finished, the brothers got the news that King Harald was coming upon them with his army. Then King Herlaug had a great quantity of meat and drink brought into the mound, and went into it himself, with eleven companions, and ordered the mound to be covered up. King Hrollaug, on the contrary, went upon the summit of the mound, on which the kings were wont to sit, and made a throne to be erected, upon which he seated himself. Then he ordered feather-beds to be laid upon the bench below, on which the earls were wont to be seated, and threw himself down from his high seat or throne into the earls' seat, giving himself the title of earl. Now Hrollaug went to meet King Harald, gave up to him his whole kingdom, offered to enter into his service, and told him his whole proceeding. Then took King Harald a sword, fastened it to Hrollaug's belt, bound a shield to his neck, and made him thereupon an earl, and led him to his earl's seat; and therewith gave him the district of Numedal, and set him as earl over it.\*

\* Before writing was in general use, this symbolical way of performing all important legal acts appears to have entered into the jurisprudence of all savage nations; and according to Gibbon, chap. 44., "the jurisprudence of the first Romans exhibited the scenes of a pantomime: the words were adapted to the gestures, and the slightest error or neglect in the *forms* of proceeding was sufficient to annul the *substance* of the fairest claims." This ceremony of demission from the seat of a king, and assumption of the rank and seat of an earl, and the subsequent investiture of Hrollaug by the ceremony of binding a sword and shield on him, and leading him to the earls' seat, have probably been ceremonies adopted from the feudal countries. Harald Haarfager's object appears to have been to feudalise the dominions he conquered from the small kings; but the subsequent partition of the country among his

King Harald then returned to Drontheim, where he dwelt during the winter, and always afterwards called it his home. He fixed here his head residence, which is called Lade. This winter he took to wife Asa, a daughter of Earl Hakon Griotgardsson, who then stood in great favour and honour with the king. In spring the king fitted out his ships. In winter he had caused a great frigate (a dragon) to be built, and had it fitted out in the most splendid way, and brought his house-troops and his berserkers on board. The fore-castle men were picked men, for they had the king's banner. From the stem to the mid-hold was called rausn\*, or the fore-defence; and there were the berserkers.† Such men only were received into King Harald's house-troop as were remarkable for strength, courage, and all kinds of dexterity; and they alone got place in his ship, for he had a good choice of house-troops from the best men of every district. King Harald had a great army, many large ships, and many men of might followed him. Hornklofe, in his poem called "Glymdrapa," tells of this; and also that King Harald had a battle with the people of Orkadale, at Opdalen forest, before he went upon this expedition.

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CHAPTER  
IX.King Harald's home  
affairs.

" O'er the broad heath the bowstrings twang,  
While high in air the arrows sang;  
The iron shower drives to flight  
The foemen from the bloody fight.  
The warder of great Odin's shrine,  
The fair-haired son of Odin's line,  
Raises the voice which gives the cheer,  
First in the track of wolf or bear.  
His master voice drives them along  
To Hell—a destined, trembling throng;

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descendants, and their feuds with each other, prevented the permanency of feudal tenures under the crown; and the holdings being only personal, not hereditary, were of less value than the udal rights to land.

\* Rausn is explained by Schöning to have been that part of the vessel where the rise begins to form the bow—the fore-castle-deck.

† Berserker. See note, Chapter 6. "Ynglinga Saga."



## SAGA III.

And Nokve's ship, with glancing sides,  
Must fly to the wild ocean's tides,—  
Must fly before the king who leads  
Norse axe-men on their ocean-steeds."

CHAPTER  
X.  
Battle at  
Solskiel.

King Harald moved out with his army from Drontheim, and went southwards to Möre.\* Hunthiof was the name of the king who ruled over the district of Möre. Solve Klofe was the name of his son, and both were great warriors. King Nokve, who ruled over Raumsdal†, was the brother of Solve's mother. Those chiefs gathered a great force when they heard of King Harald, and came against him. They met at Solskiel‡, and there was a great battle, which was gained by King Harald. Hornklofe tells of this battle:—

" Thus did the hero known to fame,  
The leader of the shields, whose name  
Strikes every heart with dire dismay,  
Launch forth his war-ships to the fray.  
Two kings he fought ; but little strife  
Was needed to cut short their life.  
A clang of arms by the sea-shore,—  
And the shields' sound was heard no more."

The two kings were slain, but Solve escaped by flight; and King Harald laid both districts under his power. He staid here long in summer to establish law and order for the country people, and set men to rule them, and keep them faithful to him; and in autumn he prepared to return northwards to Drontheim. Rognvald Earl of Möre, a son of Eystein Glumre, had the summer before become one of Harald's men; and the king set him as chief over these two

\* Mæri appears derived from the old northern word Mar, the sea; the same as the Latin mare, and retained by us in moor or morass. It is applied to a flat bordering on the sea; and possibly our Murrayshire may have a common root with the two districts of Norway called South and North Möre.

† Raumsdalr is the present Ramsdal.

‡ Solskiel is an island in the parish of Ædo, in North Möre.

districts, North Möre and Raumsdal; strengthened him both with men of might and bonders, and gave him the help of ships to defend the coast against enemies. He was called Rognvald the Mighty, or the Wise; and people say both names suited well. King Harald came back to Drontheim about winter.

SAGA III.

The following spring, King Harald raised a great force in Drontheim, and gave out that he would proceed to South Möre. Solve Klofe had passed the winter in his ships of war, plundering in North Möre, and had killed many of King Harald's men; pillaging some places, burning others, and making great ravage: but sometimes he had been, during the winter, with his friend King Arnvid in South Möre. Now when he heard that King Harald was come with ships and a great army, he gathered people, and was strong in men-at-arms; for many thought they had to take vengeance of King Harald. Solve Klofe went southwards to the Fiorde, which King Audbiorn ruled over, to ask him to help, and join his force to King Arnvid's and his own. "For," said he, "it is now clear that we all have but one course to take; and that is to rise, all as one man, against King Harald, for we have strength enough, and fate must decide the victory: for as to the other condition of becoming his servants, that is no condition for us, who are not less noble than Harald. My father thought it better to fall in battle for his kingdom, than to go willingly into King Harald's service, or not to abide the chance of weapons like the Numedal kings." King Solve's speech was such that King Audbiorn promised his help, and gathered a great force together, and went with it to King Arnvid, and they had a great army. Now, they got news that King Harald was come from the north, and they met within Solskiel.\* And it was the custom to

CHAPTER  
XI.  
Fall of  
the kings  
Arnvid and  
Audbiorn.

\* An island in the parish of Edö, in North Möre.



## SAGA III.

lash the ships together, stem to stem; so it was done now. King Harald laid his ship against King Arnvid's, and there was the sharpest fight, and many men fell on both sides. At last King Harald was raging with anger, and went forward to the fore-deck, and slew so dreadfully that all the forecastle men of Arnvid's ship were driven aft of the mast, and some fell. Thereupon Harald boarded the ship, and King Arnvid's men tried to save themselves by flight, and he himself was slain in his ship. King Audbiorn also fell; but Solve fled. So says Hornklofe:—

“ Against the hero's shield in vain  
The arrow-storm fierce pours its rain.  
The king stands on the blood-stained deck,  
Trampling on many a stout foe's neck;  
And high above the dinning stound  
Of helm and axe, and ringing sound  
Of blade and shield, and raven's cry,  
Is heard his shout of 'Victory!' ”

Of King Harald's men, fell his earls Asgaut and Asbiorn, together with his brothers-in-law Griotgard and Hrollaug, the sons of Earl Hakon of Lade. Solve became afterwards a great sea-king, and often did great damage in King Harald's dominions.

CHAPTER  
XII.  
King Vemund  
burnt to  
death.

After this battle King Harald subdued South Möre; but Vemund, King Audbiorn's brother, still had the Fiorde district. It was now late in harvest, and King Harald's men gave him the counsel not to proceed southwards round Stad.† Then King Harald set Earl Rognvald over South and North Möre and also Raumsdal, and he had many people about him. King Harald returned to Drontheim. The same winter Rognvald went over the inner neck of land, and southwards to the Fiorde district. There he heard news of King Vemund, and came by night to a place called Notsdal, where King

\* Stad is often mentioned in the sagas, being the most westerly part of the mainland of Norway; and vessels coasting along from the north or south had to steer a new course along the coast after passing Stad. It is now called Stadland.

Vemund was living in guest-quarters. Earl Rognvald surrounded the house in which they were quartered, and burnt the king in it, together with ninety men. Then came Berdlukaare to Earl Rognvald with a completely armed long-ship, and they both returned to Möre. The earl took all the ships Vemund had, and all the goods he could get hold of. Berdlukaare proceeded north to Drontheim to King Harald, and became his man; and a dreadful berserk he was.

SAGA III.

The following spring King Harald went southwards with his fleet along the coast, and subdued the district of the Fiorde. Then he sailed eastward along the land until he came to Viken; but he left Earl Hakon Griotgardsson behind, and set him over the Fiorde district. Earl Hakon sent word to Earl Atle the Small that he should leave Sogne district, and be earl over Gaular district, as he had been before, alleging that King Harald had given Sogne district to him. Earl Atle sent word back that he would keep both Sogne district and Gaular district, until he met King Harald. The two earls quarrelled about this so long, that both gathered troops. They met at Fialar, in Stavanger fiord, and had a great battle, in which Earl Hakon fell, and Earl Atle got a mortal wound, and his men carried him to the island of Atle\*, where he died. So says Eyvind Skaldaspiller:—

CHAPTER  
XIII.  
Death of  
Earl Hakon and  
of Earl  
Atle the  
Small.

“ He who stood a rooted oak,  
Unshaken by the swordsman’s stroke,  
Amidst the whiz of arrows slain,  
Has fallen upon Fialar’s plain.  
There, by the ocean’s rocky shore,  
The waves are stained with the red gore  
Of stout Earl Hakon Griotgard’s son,  
And of brave warriors many a one.”

---

\* Atla isle in Fialar, now included in Söndfiord, has probably got its name from Atle. Three standing stones at Velnæs church, supposed to have been erected to his memory, still remain.



SAGA III.  
 CHAPTER  
 XIV.  
 Of King  
 Harald  
 and the  
 Swedish  
 King Eric.

King Harald came with his fleet eastward to Viken, and landed at Tunsberg, which was then a trading town. He had then been four years in Drontheim, and in all that time had not been in Viken. Here he heard the news that Eric Eymundson, king of Sweden, had laid under him Vermeland, and was taking scatt or land-tax from all the forest settlers; and also that he called the whole country north to Swinesund, and west along the sea, Westgothland; and which altogether he reckoned to his kingdom, and took land-tax from it. Over this country he had set an earl, by name Hrane Gotska, who had the earldom between Swinesund and the Gotha river, and was a mighty earl. And it was told to King Harald that the Swedish king said he would not rest until he had as great a kingdom in Viken as Sigurd Ring, or his son Ragnar Lodbrok, had possessed; and that was Raumarige and Westfold, all the way to the isle Grenmar, and also Vingulmark, and all that lay south of it. In these districts many chiefs, and many other people, had given obedience to the Swedish king. King Harald was very angry at this, and summoned the bonders to a Thing at Folden, where he laid an accusation\* against them for treason towards him. Some bonders defended themselves from the accusation, some paid fines, some were punished. He went thus through the whole district during the summer, and in harvest he did the same in Raumarige, and laid the two districts under his power. Towards winter he heard that Eric king of Sweden was, with his court, going about in Vermeland in guest-quarters.

CHAPTER  
 XV.  
 King Harald at a

King Harald takes his way across the Eida forest eastward, and comes out in Vermeland, where he also orders feasts to be prepared for himself. There was

\* A reference to a Thing, and an accusation before it, appears to have been a necessary mode of proceeding, even to authorise the king to punish for treason the udal landholders.

a man, by name Aake, who was the greatest of the bonders of Vermeland, very rich, and at that time very aged. He sent men to King Harald, and invited him to a feast, and the king promised to come on the day appointed. Aake invited also King Eric to a feast, and appointed the same day. Aake had a great feasting hall, but it was old; and he made a new hall, not less than the old one, and had it ornamented in the most splendid way. The new hall he had hung with new hangings, but the old had only its old ornaments. Now when the kings came to the feast, King Eric with his court was taken into the old hall; but Harald with his followers into the new. The same difference was in all the table furniture, and King Eric and his men had the old-fashioned vessels and horns, but all gilded and splendid; while King Harald and his men had entirely new vessels and horns adorned with gold, all with carved figures, and shining like glass: and both companies had the best of liquor. Aake the bonder had formerly been King Halfdan the Black's man. Now when daylight came, and the feast was quite ended, and the kings made themselves ready for their journey, and the horses were saddled, came Aake before King Harald, leading in his hand his son Ubbe, a boy of twelve years of age, and said, "If the goodwill I have shown to thee, sire, in my feast, be worth thy friendship, show it hereafter to my son. I give him to thee now for thy service." The king thanked him with many agreeable words for his friendly entertainment, and promised him his full friendship in return. Then Aake brought out great presents, which he gave to the king, and they gave each other thereafter the parting kiss. Aake went next to the Swedish king, who was dressed and ready for the road, but not in the best humour. Aake gave to him also good and valuable gifts; but the king answered only with few words, and mounted his horse.

SAGA III.

feast of the  
peasant  
Aake, and  
the murder  
of Aake.



## SAGA III.

Aake followed the king on the road, and talked with him. The road led through a wood which was near to the house; and when Aake came to the wood, the king said to him, "How was it that thou madest such a difference between me and King Harald as to give him the best of every thing, although thou knowest thou art my man?" "I think," answered Aake, "that there failed in it nothing, king, either to you or to your attendants, in friendly entertainment at this feast. But that all the utensils for your drinking were old, was because you are now old; but King Harald is in the bloom of youth, and therefore I gave him the new things. And as to my being thy man, thou art just as much my man." On this the king out with his sword, and gave Aake his death-wound. King Harald was ready now also to mount his horse, and desired that Aake should be called. The people went to seek him; and some ran up the road that King Eric had taken, and found Aake there dead. They came back, and told the news to King Harald, and he bids his men to be up, and avenge Aake the bonder. And away rode he and his men the way King Eric had taken, until they came in sight of each other. Each for himself rode as hard as he could, until Eric came into the wood which divides Gotland and Vermeland. There King Harald wheels about, and returns to Vermeland, and lays the country under him, and kills King Eric's men wheresoever he can find them. In winter King Harald returned to Raumarige, and dwelt there a while.

CHAPTER  
XVI.  
King  
Harald's  
journey to  
Tunsberg.

King Harald went out in winter to his ships at Tunsberg, rigged them, and sailed away eastward over the Fiord, and subjected all Vingulmark to his dominion. All winter he was out with his ships, and marauded in Ranrige\*; so says Thorbiorn Hornklofe:—

\* Ranrige was the present Bahuus province, between the Gotha and Glommen river-mouths.

“ The Norseman’s king is on the sea,  
 Tho’ bitter wintry cold it be, —  
 On the wild waves his Yule keeps he.  
 When our brisk king can get his way,  
 He’ll no more by the fireside stay  
 Than the young sun : he makes us play  
 The game of the bright sun-god\* Freyr.  
 But the soft Swede loves well the fire,  
 The well-stuffed couch, the downy glove,  
 And from the hearth-seat will not move.”

SAGA III.

The Gotlanders gathered people together all over the country.

In spring, when the ice was breaking up, they drove stakes into the Gotha river to hinder King Harald with his ships from coming to the land. But King Harald laid his ships alongside the stakes, and plundered the country, and burnt all around ; so says Hornklofe : —

CHAPTER  
 XVII.  
 The battle  
 in Gotland.

“ The king, who finds a dainty feast  
 For battle-bird and prowling beast,  
 Has won in war the southern land  
 That lies along the ocean’s strand.  
 The leader of the helmets, he  
 Who leads his ships o’er the dark sea,  
 Harald, whose high-rigged masts appear  
 Like antlered fronts of the wild deer,  
 Has laid his ships close alongside  
 Of the foe’s piles with daring pride.”

Afterwards the Gotlanders came down to the strand with a great army, and gave battle to King Harald, and great was the fall of men. But it was King Harald who gained the day. Thus says Hornklofe : —

“ Whistles the battle-axe in its swing,  
 O’er head the whizzing javelins sing,  
 Helmet and shield and hauberk ring ;  
 The air-song of the lance is loud,  
 The arrows pipe in darkening cloud ;

---

\* In northern mythology Freyr, the god of the sun, is supposed to have been born at the winter solstice ; and the return of the lengthening day was celebrated by a feast called Yule, which coinciding with Christmas, was transferred to the Christian festival.



## SAGA III.

Through helm and mail the foemen feel  
 The blue edge of our king's good steel.  
 Who can withstand our gallant king?  
 The Gotland men their flight must wing."

CHAPTER  
 XVIII.  
 Hrane the  
 Gotlander's  
 death.

King Harald went far and wide through Gotland, and many were the battles he fought there, and in general he was victorious. In one of these battles fell Hrane the Gotlander; and then the king took his whole land north of the river and west of the Vener, and also Vermeland. And after he turned back therefrom, he set Guttorm as chief to defend the country, and left a great force with him. King Harald himself went first to the Uplands, where he remained a while, and then proceeded northwards over the Dovrefielde to Drontheim, where he dwelt for a long time. Harald began to have children. By Asa he had four sons. The eldest was Guttorm. Halfdan the Black and Halfdan the White were twins. Sigfröde was the fourth. They were all brought up in Drontheim with all honour.

CHAPTER  
 XIX.  
 Battle in  
 Hafurs-  
 fiord.

News came in from the south land that the people of Hordaland and Rogaland, Agder and Thelemark, were gathering, and bringing together ships and weapons, and a great body of men. The leaders of this were Eric king of Hordaland; Sulke king of Rogaland, and his brother Earl Sote; Kiotve the Rich, king of Agder, and his son Thor Haklang; and from Thelemark two brothers, Roald Ryg and Hadd the Hard. Now when Harald got certain news of this, he assembled his forces, set his ships on the water, made himself ready with his men, and set out southwards along the coast, gathering many people from every district. King Eric heard of this when he came south of Stad; and having assembled all the men he could expect, he proceeded southwards to meet the force which he knew was coming to his help from the east. The whole met together north of Jeddern, and

went into Hafursfiord, where King Harald was waiting with his forces. A great battle began, which was both hard and long; but at last King Harald gained the day. There King Eric fell, and King Sulke, with his brother Earl Sote. Thor Haklang, who was a great berserk, had laid his ship against King Harald's, and there was above all measure a desperate attack, until Thor Haklang fell, and his whole ship was cleared of men. Then King Kiotve fled to a little isle outside, on which there was a good place of strength. Thereafter all his men fled, some to their ships, some up to the land; and the latter ran southwards over the country of Jeddern. So says Hornklofe, viz. :—

“ Has the news reached you?—have you heard  
 Of the great fight at Hafurdsfiord,\*  
 Between our noble king brave Harald  
 And King Kiotve rich in gold?  
 The foemen came from out the East,  
 Keen for the fray as for a feast.  
 A gallant sight it was to see  
 Their fleet sweep o'er the dark-blue sea;  
 Each war-ship, with its threatening throat  
 Of dragon fierce or ravenous brute†  
 Grim gaping from the prow; its wales  
 Glittering with burnished shields‡, like scales;  
 Its crew of udal men of war,  
 Whose snow-white targets shone from far;  
 And many a mailed spearman stout  
 From the West countries round about,  
 English and Scotch, a foreign host,  
 And swordsmen from the far French coast.§  
 And as the foemen's ships drew near,  
 The dreadful din you well might hear;

---

\* Hafrsfiördr, now Hafsfjord, north of Jederen district.

† The war-ships were called dragons, from being decorated with the head of a dragon, serpent, or other wild animal; and the word “draco” was adopted in the Latin of the middle ages to denote a ship of war of the larger class. The snekke was the cutter or smaller war-ship.

‡ The shields were hung over the side rails of the ships.

§ It is curious to find that English, Scotch, and French men-at-arms, from the West countries, were in Kiotve's army.



## SAGA III.

Savage berserkers roaring mad,  
 And champions fierce in wolf-skins clad,\*  
 Howling like wolves; and clanking jar  
 Of many a mail-clad man of war.  
 Thus the foe came; but our brave king  
 Taught them to fly as fast again.  
 For when he saw their force come o'er,  
 He launched his war-ships from the shore;  
 On the deep sea he launched his fleet,  
 And boldly rowed the foe to meet.  
 Fierce was the shock, and loud the clang  
 Of shields, until the fierce Haklang,  
 The foeman's famous berserk, fell.  
 Then from our men burst forth the yell  
 Of victory; and the King of Gold  
 Could not withstand our Harald bold,  
 But fled before his flaky locks  
 For shelter to the island rocks.  
 All in the bottom of the ships  
 The wounded lay, in ghastly heaps;  
 Backs up and faces down they lay,  
 Under the row-seats stowed away;  
 And many a warrior's shield, I ween,  
 Might on the warrior's back be seen,  
 To shield him as he fled amain  
 From the fierce stone-storm's pelting rain.  
 The mountain-folk, as I've heard say,  
 Ne'er stopped as they ran from the fray,  
 Till they had crossed the Jeddern sea,  
 And reached their homes — so keen each soul  
 To drown his fright in the mead bowl."

CHAPTER  
 XX.  
 King Harald the  
 supreme  
 sovereign  
 in Norway.  
 Of the settlement of  
 distant  
 lands.

After this battle King Harald met no opposition in Norway, for all his opponents and greatest enemies were cut off. But some, and they were a great multitude, fled out of the country, and thereby great districts were peopled. Jemteland and Helsingland were peopled then, although some Norwegians had already set up their habitation there. In the discontent that King Harald seized on the lands of Norway†, the out-countries of Iceland and the Faroe Isles were discovered and peopled. The Northmen had also a

\* The wolf-skin pelts were nearly as good as armour against the sword.

† This taking the land appears to have been an attempt to introduce the feudal tenures and services.

great resort to Shetland, and many men left Norway, flying the country on account of King Harald, and went on viking cruises into the West sea. In winter they were in the Orkney Islands and Hebrides; but marauded in summer in Norway, and did great damage. Many, however, were the mighty men who took service under King Harald, and became his men, and dwelt in the land with him.

When King Harald had now become sole king over all Norway, he remembered what that proud girl had said to him; so he sent men to her, and had her brought to him, and took her to his bed. And these were their children: Alaf—she was the eldest; then was their son Hræreck; then Sigtryg, Frode, and Thorgils. King Harald had many wives\* and many children. Among them he had one wife, who was called Ragnhild the Mighty, a daughter of King Eric, from Jutland; and by her he had a son, Eric Bloody-axe. He was also married to Swanhilde, a daughter of Earl Eystein; and their sons were Olaf Geirstadaalf, Biorn, and Ragnar Ryskill. Lastly, King Harald married Ashilda, a daughter of King Dagsson, up in Ringerige; and their children were Dag, Ring, Gudrod, Skiria, and Ingigerd. It is told that King Harald put away nine wives when he married Ragnhild the Mighty. So says Hornklofe:—

“ Harald, of noblest race the head,  
A Danish wife took to his bed;

---

\* Polygamy—possibly brought with them from their original seats in Asia—appears to have been a privilege of the royal race, among the Northmen, down to the 13th century. The kings had concubines as well as a plurality of wives; and the children appear to have been equally udal-born to the kingdom, whether born in marriage or not. It does not appear from the sagas what forms or ceremonies constituted a marriage before the introduction of Christianity. A marriage feast or wedding is mentioned, and one of the wives appears to have been the *drottning* or queen; but we are not told of any religious ceremony besides the feast.



## SAGA III.

And out of doors nine wives he thrust, —  
 The mothers of the princes first,  
 Who in Holmryger hold command,  
 And those who rule in Horder land.  
 And then he packed from out the place  
 The children born of Holge's race."

CHAPTER  
 XXI.  
 Of King  
 Harald's  
 children  
 and mar-  
 riages.

King Harald's children were all fostered and brought up by their relations on the mother's side. Guttorm the Duke had poured water over King Harald's eldest son\*, and had given him his own name. He set the child upon his knee†, and was his foster-father, and took him with himself eastward to Viken, and there he was brought up in the house of Guttorm. Guttorm ruled the whole land in Viken, and the Uplands, when King Harald was absent.

CHAPTER  
 XXII.  
 King Ha-  
 rald's voy-  
 age to the  
 west.

King Harald heard that the vikings, who were in the West sea in winter, plundered far and wide in the middle part of Norway; and therefore every summer he made an expedition to search the isles and out-skerries‡ on the coast. Wheresoever the vikings heard of him they all took to flight, and most of them out into the open ocean. At last the king grew weary of this work, and therefore one summer he sailed with his fleet right out into the West sea. First he came to Shetland, and he slew all the vikings who could not save themselves by flight. Then King Harald sailed southwards, to the Orkney Islands, and cleared them all of vikings. Thereafter he proceeded

\* This pouring water over a child, and giving it a name, could scarcely have been an original coincidence between the Odin worship and Christianity. In Odinism it betokens nothing, and if really used has probably been borrowed from the Christian ceremony; or more probably, in the age when Christianity was considered to consist altogether in the ceremony of baptism, the scalds have thought it decorous to represent the ancestors to whom great families traced themselves as baptized Christians, not unbaptized heathens. It is only of such personages that we hear of this Odin-baptism, and not of the other sons who had no royal descendants.

† This appears to have been a generally used symbol of adoption of a child.

‡ Skerries are the uninhabited dry or half-tide rocks of a coast.

to the Hebrides, plundered there, and slew many vikings who formerly had had men-at-arms under them. Many a battle was fought, and King Harald was always victorious. He then plundered far and wide in Scotland itself, and had a battle there. When he was come westward as far as the Isle of Man, the report of his exploits on the land had gone before him; for all the inhabitants had fled over to Scotland, and the island was left entirely bare both of people and goods, so that King Harald and his men made no booty when they landed. So says Hornklofe:—

“ The wise, the noble king, great Harald,  
Whose hand so freely scatters gold,  
Led many a northern shield to war  
Against the town upon the shore.  
The wolves soon gathered on the sand  
Of that sea-shore; for Harald’s hand  
The Scottish army drove away,  
And on the coast left wolves a prey.”

In this war fell Ivar, a son of Rognvald, Earl of Möre; and King Harald gave Rognvald, as a compensation for the loss, the Orkney and Shetland isles, when he sailed from the West; but Rognvald immediately gave both these countries to his brother Sigurd, who remained behind them; and King Harald, before sailing eastward, gave Sigurd the earldom of them. Thorstein the Red, a son of Olaf the White, and Aude the Wealthy, entered into partnership with him; and after plundering in Scotland, they subdued Caithness and Sutherland, as far as Ekkjalsbakki.\* Earl Sigurd killed Melbrigda-Tonn, a Scotch earl, and hung his head to his stirrup-leather; but the calf of his leg was scratched by the teeth, which were sticking out from the head, and the wound caused

\* Ekkjalsbakki, the Ekkial, is now the Oickel, a river falling into the Frith of Dornoch; and the banks or braes on its borders are the Ekkjalsbakki of the saga—not the Ochil hills, as some have imagined; and the burial mound may be still remaining possibly.



SAGA III. inflammation in his leg, of which the earl died, and he was laid in a mound at Ekjalsbakki. His son Guttorm ruled over these countries for about a year thereafter, and died without children. Many vikings, both Danes and Northmen, set themselves down then in those countries.

CHAPTER  
XXIII.  
King Harald has  
his hair  
clipped.

After King Harald had subdued the whole land, he was one day at a feast in Möre, given by Earl Rognvald. Then King Harald went into a bath, and had his hair dressed. Earl Rognvald now cut his hair, which had been uncut and uncombed for ten years; and therefore the king had been called Ugly Head. But then Earl Rognvald gave him the distinguishing name — Harald Haarfager; and all who saw him agreed that there was the greatest truth in that surname, for he had the most beautiful and abundant head of hair.

CHAPTER  
XXIV.  
Rolf  
Ganger is  
driven into  
banishment.

Earl Rognvald was King Harald's dearest friend, and the king had the greatest regard for him. He was married to Hilda, a daughter of Rolf Næfia, and their sons were Rolf and Thorer. Earl Rognvald had also three sons by concubines, — the one called Hallad, the second Einar, the third Hrollaug; and all three were grown men when their brothers born in marriage were still children. Rolf became a great viking, and was of so stout a growth that no horse could carry him, and wheresoever he went he must go on foot; and therefore he was called Gange-Rolf.\* He plundered much in the East sea.† One summer, as he was coming from the eastward on a viking's expedition to the coast of Viken, he landed there and made

\* Gange-Rolf, Rolf Ganger, Rolf the Walker, was the conqueror of Normandy. He appears to have had among his ancestors a Rolf Ganger; so that the popular story of his great obesity, which seems scarcely consistent with his great military activity, may not be literally true.

† Austrvigr, the lands on the south side of the Baltic.

a cattle foray.\* As King Harald happened, just at that time, to be in Viken, he heard of it, and was in a great rage; for he had forbid, by the greatest punishment, the plundering within the bounds of the country. The king assembled a Thing, and had Rolf declared an outlaw over all Norway. When Rolf's mother, Hilda, heard of it she hastened to the king, and entreated peace for Rolf; but the king was so enraged that her entreaty was of no avail. Then Hilda spake these lines:—

“ Think'st thou, King Harald, in thy anger,  
To drive away my brave Rolf Ganger,  
Like a mad wolf, from out the land?  
Why, Harald, raise thy mighty hand?  
Why banish Næfia's gallant name-son,  
The brother of brave udal-men?  
Why is thy cruelty so fell?  
Bethink thee, monarch, it is ill  
With such a wolf at wolf to play,  
Who, driven to the wild woods away,  
May make the king's best deer his prey.”

Gange-Rolf went afterwards over sea to the West to the Hebudes, or Sydreyar†; and at last farther west to Valland‡, where he plundered and subdued for himself a great earldom, which he peopled with Northmen, from which that land is called Normandy. Gange-Rolf's son was William, father to Richard, and grandfather to another Richard, who was the father of Richard Longspear, and grandfather of William the Bastard, from whom all the following English kings are descended. From Gange-Rolf also are

\* A strandhögg, or foray for cattle to be slaughtered on the strand, for his ships.

† Sydreyar, — of which we still retain the name Sodor, applied to the bishopric of Sodor and Man, — was the southern division of the Hebrides, or Hebudes.

‡ Valland was the name applied to all the west coast of France, but more particularly to Bretagne, as being inhabited by the Valer or inhabitants of Wales and Cornwales (Cornwall), expelled by the Saxons from Great Britain in the last half of the 5th century. The adjective Valskr (Welsh) was used to denote what belonged to this Valland.



## SAGA III.

descended the earls in Normandy. Queen Ragnhild the Mighty lived three years after she came to Norway; and, after her death, her son and King Harald's was taken to Thorer Hroaldson, and Eric was fostered by him.

CHAPTER  
XXV.  
Of the  
Laplander  
Swase and  
King Harald.

King Harald, one winter, went about in guest-quarters in Upland, and had ordered a Christmas feast to be prepared for him at the farm Thopte.\* On Christmas eve came Swase to the door, just as the king went to table, and sent a message to the king to ask if he would go out with him. The king was angry at such a message, and the man who had brought it in took out with him a reply of the king's displeasure. But Swase, notwithstanding, desired that his message should be delivered a second time; adding to it, that he was the Laplander whose hut the king had promised to visit, and which stood on the other side of the ridge. Now the king went out, and promised to follow him, and went over the ridge to his hut, although some of his men dissuaded him. There stood Snæfrid, the daughter of Swase, a most beautiful girl; and she filled a cup of mead for the king. But he took hold both of the cup and of her hand. Immediately it was as if a hot fire went through his body; and he wanted that very night to take her to his bed. But Swase said that should not be unless by main force, if he did not first make her his lawful wife. Now King Harald made Snæfrid his lawful wife, and loved her so passionately that he forgot his kingdom, and all that belonged to his high dignity. They had four sons: the one was Sigurd Rise; the others Halfdan Haaleg, Gudrod Liome, and Rognvald Rettilbeen. Thereafter Snæfrid died; but her corpse never changed, but was as fresh and red as when she lived. The king sat always beside her, and thought she

\* Now Tofte, near the head of Gudbrandsdal.

SAGA III.

would come to life again. And so it went on for three years that he was sorrowing over her death, and the people over his delusion. At last Thorleif the Wise succeeded, by his prudence, in curing him of his delusion by accosting him thus: — “It is nowise wonderful, king, that thou grieveest over so beautiful and noble a wife, and bestowest costly coverlets and beds of down on her corpse, as she desired; but these honours fall short of what is due, as she still lies in the same clothes. It would be more suitable to raise her, and change her dress.” As soon as the body was raised in the bed all sorts of corruption and foul smells came from it, and it was necessary in all haste to gather a pile of wood and burn it; but before this could be done the body turned blue, and worms, toads, newts, paddocks, and all sorts of ugly reptiles came out of it, and it sank into ashes. Now the king came to his understanding again, threw the madness out of his mind, and after that day ruled his kingdom as before. He was strengthened and made joyful by his subjects, and his subjects by him, and the country by both.

After King Harald had experienced the cunning of the Laplander, he was so angry that he drove from him the sons he had with her, and would not suffer them before his eyes. But one of them, Gudrod Liome, went to his foster-father Thiodolf, and asked him to go to the king, who was then in the Uplands; for Thiodolf was a great friend of the king. And so they went, and came to the king’s house late in the evening, and sat down together unnoticed near the door. The king walked up and down the floor casting his eye along the benches; for he had a feast in the house, and the mead was just mixed. The king then murmured out these lines: —

CHAPTER  
XXVI.  
Of Thio-  
dolf of  
Huine, the  
Scald.

“Tell me, ye aged grey-haired heroes,  
Who have come here to seek repose,



## SAGA III.

Wherefore must I so many keep  
Of such a set, who, one and all,  
Right dearly love their souls to steep,  
From morn till night, in the mead-bowl ?”

Then Thiodolf replies : —

“ A certain wealthy chief, I think,  
Would gladly have had more to drink  
With him, upon one bloody day,  
When crowns were cracked in our sword-play.”

Thiodolf then took off his hat, and the king recognised him, and gave him a friendly reception. Thiodolf then begged the king not to cast off his sons ; “ for they would with great pleasure have taken a better family descent upon the mother’s side, if the king had given it to them.” The king assented, and told him to take Gudrod with him as formerly ; and he sent Halfdan and Sigurd to Ringerige, and Rognvald to Hadeland, and all was done as the king ordered. They grew up to be very clever men, very expert in all exercises. In these times King Harald sat in peace in the land, and the land enjoyed quietness and good crops.

CHAPTER  
XXVII.  
Of Earl  
Turf-  
Einar’s  
obtaining  
Orkney.

When Earl Rognvald in Möre heard of the death of his brother Earl Sigurd, and that the vikings were in possession of the country, he sent his son Hallad westward, who took the title of earl to begin with, and had many men-at-arms with him. When he arrived at the Orkney Islands, he established himself in the country ; but both in harvest, winter, and spring, the vikings cruised about the isles, plundering the headlands, and committing depredations on the coast. Then Earl Hallad grew tired of the business, resigned his earldom, took up again his rights as an udaller\*, and afterwards returned eastward into Norway. When Earl

\* This condition of hölldr which Hallad resumed on resigning the earldom is explained, in the Landzleygu-balk of the Gulathing Law of King Magnus, to have been that of a holder of inherited udal-land, not purchased, but received by hereditary right.

SAGA III.

Rognvald heard of this he was ill pleased with Hallad, and said his sons were very unlike their ancestors. Then said Einar, "I have enjoyed but little honour among you, and have little affection here to lose: now if you will give me force enough, I will go west to the islands, and promise you what at any rate will please you — that you shall never see me again." Earl Rognvald replied, that he would be glad if he never came back; "For there is little hope," said he, "that thou will ever be an honour to thy friends, as all thy kin on the mother's side are born slaves." Earl Rognvald gave Einar a vessel completely equipped, and he sailed with it into the West sea in harvest. When he came to the Orkney Isles, two vikings, Thorér Træskæg, and Kalf Sturfa, were in his way with two vessels. He attacked them instantly, gained the battle, and slew the two vikings. He was called Turf-Einar, because he cut peat for fuel, there being no fire-wood, as in Orkney there are no woods. He afterwards was earl over the islands, and was a mighty man. He was ugly, and blind of an eye, yet very sharp-sighted withal.

Guttorm\* dwelt principally at Tunsberg, and governed the whole of Viken when the king was not there. He defended the land, which, at that time, was much plundered by the vikings. There were disturbances also up in Gotland as long as King Eric Eymundsson lived; but he died when King Harald had been ten years king of all Norway.

CHAPTER  
XXVIII.  
King Eric  
Eymundsson's death.

After Eric, his son Biorn was king of Sweden for fifty years. He was father of Eric the Victorious, and of Olaf the father of Styrbiorn. Guttorm died on a bed of sickness at Tunsberg, and King Harald gave his son Guttorm the government of that part of his dominions, and made him chief of it.

CHAPTER  
XXIX.  
Guttorm's  
death in  
Tunsberg.

\* Duke Guttorm, Harald Haarfager's uncle.



## SAGA III.

## CHAPTER

## XXX.

Earl Rogn-  
vald burnt  
in his  
house.

When King Harald was forty years of age many of his sons were well advanced, and indeed they all came early to strength and manhood. And now they began to take it ill that the king would not give them any part of the kingdom, but put earls into every district; for they thought earls were of inferior birth to them. Then Halfdan Haaleg, and Gudrod Liome set off one spring with a great force, and came suddenly upon Earl Rognvald, earl of Möre, and surrounded the house in which he was, and burnt him and sixty men in it. Thereafter Halfdan took three long-ships, and fitted them out, and sailed into the West sea; but Gudrod set himself down in the land which Rognvald formerly had. Now when King Harald heard this he set out with a great force against Gudrod, who had no other way left but to surrender, and he was sent to Agder. King Harald then set Earl Rognvald's son Thorer over Möre, and gave him his daughter Alof in marriage. Thorer, called the Silent, got the same territory his father Rognvald had possessed.

## CHAPTER

## XXXI.

Halfdan  
Haaleg's  
death.

Halfdan Haaleg came very unexpectedly to Orkney, and Earl Einar immediately fled; but came back soon after, about harvest time, unnoticed by Halfdan. They met, and after a short battle Halfdan fled the same night. Einar and his men lay all night without tents, and when it was light in the morning they searched the whole island, and killed every man they could lay hold of. Then Einar said, "What is that I see upon the isle of Ronaldsha? Is it a man or a bird? Sometimes it raises itself up, and sometimes lies down again." They went to it, and found it was Halfdan Haaleg, and took him prisoner.

Earl Einar sang the following song the evening before he went into this battle:—

"Where is the spear of Rollaug? \* where  
Is stout Rolf Ganger's bloody spear?"

---

\* Rollaug, Rolf Ganger, Thorer the Silent, and Einar were all sons

I see them not ; yet never fear,  
 For Einar will not vengeance spare  
 Against his father's murderers, though  
 Rollaug and Rolf are somewhat slow,  
 And silent Thorer sits and dreams  
 At home, beside the mead-bowl's streams."

Thereafter Earl Einar went up to Halfdan, and cut a spread eagle upon his back\*, by striking his sword through his back into his belly, dividing his ribs from the back-bone down to his loins, and tearing out his lungs; and so Halfdan was killed. Einar then sang:—

" For Rognvald's death my sword is red :  
 Of vengeance it cannot be said  
 That Einar's share is left unsped.  
 So now, brave boys, let's raise a mound,—  
 Heap stones and gravel on the ground  
 O'er Halfdan's corpse : this is the way  
 We Norsemen our scatt duties pay."

Then Earl Einar took possession of the Orkney Isles as before. Now when these tidings came to Norway, Halfdan's brothers took it much to heart, and thought that his death demanded vengeance; and many were of the same opinion. When Einar heard this, he sang:—

" Many a stout udal-man, I know,  
 Has cause to wish my head laid low ;  
 And many an angry udal knife  
 Would gladly drink of Einar's life.  
 But ere they lay Earl Einar low,—  
 Ere this stout heart betrays its cause,  
 Full many a heart will writhe, we know,  
 In the wolf's fangs, or eagle's claws."

King Harald now ordered a levy, and gathered a great force, with which he proceeded westward to Orkney; and when Earl Einar heard that King Harald

CHAPTER  
 XXXII.  
 King Ha-  
 rald and  
 Earl Einar  
 reconciled.

of that Earl Rognvald whom Harald Haarfager's sons, and among them Halfdan, had surprised and burnt in his house. They ought, according to the opinion of the times, to have taken vengeance as well as Einar on the murderers.

† This kind of punishment was called *rista örn*—to cut an eagle.



SAGA III. — was come, he fled over to Caithness. He made the following verses on this occasion : —

“ Many a bearded man must roam,  
 An exile from his house and home,  
 For cow or horse ; but Halfdan’s gore  
 Is red on Ronaldsha’s wild shore.  
 A nobler deed — on Harald’s shield  
 The arm of one who ne’er will yield  
 Has left a scar. Let peasants dread  
 The vengeance of the Norsemen’s head ;  
 I reckon not of his wrath, but sing,  
 ‘ Do thy worst ! — I defy thee, king ! ’ ”

Men and messages, however, passed between the king and the earl, and at last it came to a conference ; and when they met the earl submitted the case altogether to the king’s decision, and the king condemned the earl and the Orkney people to pay a fine of sixty marks of gold. As the bonders thought this was too heavy for them to pay, the earl offered to pay the whole if they would surrender their udal lands to him. This they all agreed to do : the poor because they had but little pieces of land ; the rich because they could redeem their udal rights again when they liked. Thus the earl paid the whole fine to the king, who returned in harvest to Norway. The earls for a long time afterwards possessed all the udal lands in Orkney, until Sigurd Lodvison gave back the udal rights.\*

CHAPTER  
 XXXIII.  
 Death of  
 Guttorm.  
 Death of  
 Halfdan  
 the White.

While King Harald’s son Guttorm had the defence of Viken, he sailed outside of the islands on the coast, and came in by one of the mouths of the Gotha river. When he lay there Solve Klof came upon him, and immediately gave him battle, and Guttorm fell. Halfdan the White and Halfdan the Black went out on an expedition, and plundered in the East sea, and had a battle in Eastland †, where Halfdan the White fell.

\* There are still a few udal properties in Orkney, and many which are described in the feudal charters as having been udal lands of old.

† Eastland is Esthonia.

Eric, Harald's son, was fostered in the house of the herse Thorer, son of Hroald, in the Fiord district. He was the most beloved and honoured by King Harald of all his sons. When Eric was twelve years old, King Harald gave him five long-ships, with which he went on an expedition,—first in the Baltic; then southwards to Denmark, Friesland\*, and Saxonland; on which expedition he passed four years. He then sailed out into the West sea, and plundered in Scotland, Bretland†, Ireland, and Valland‡, and passed four years more in this way. Then he sailed north to Finmark§, and all the way to Biarmeland||, where he had many a battle, and won many a victory. When he came back to Finmark, his men found a girl in a Lapland hut, whose equal for beauty they never had seen. She said her name was Gunhild, and that her father dwelt in Halogaland, and was called Ozur Tote. “I am here,” she said, “to learn Lapland-art, from two of the most knowing Laplanders in all Finmark, who are now out hunting. They both want me in marriage. They are so skilful that they can hunt out traces either upon the frozen or the thawed earth, like dogs; and they can run so swiftly on snow-scates, that neither man nor beast can come near them in speed. They hit whatever they take aim at, and thus kill every man who comes near them. When they

SAGA III.  
CHAPTER  
XXXIV.  
Marriage  
of Eric, the  
son of King  
Harald.

\* Friesland appears to have been the name given to the whole coast from the Eyder in Schleswig to North Holland, and to have been called Saxonland (Saxland) or Friesland.

† Bretland (Britton land) was that part of Britain inhabited by the ancient inhabitants. The sagas give the name of England only to the parts inhabited by the Anglo-Saxons. Wales, Cornwall, and the west coast of the island, are always called Bretland.

‡ Valland, the west coast of France, in which the inhabitants of Wales and Cornwall settled in the 5th century.

§ Finmark is the country we call Lapland in the north of Norway and Sweden.

|| Biarmeland was the coast of the White Sea about the mouth of the Dwina, and now the Russian province of Archangel.



SAGA III. are angry the very earth turns away in terror, and whatever living thing they look upon then falls dead. Now ye must not come in their way; but I will hide you here in the hut, and ye must try to get them killed." They agreed to it, and she hid them, and then took a leather bag, in which they thought there were ashes which she took in her hand, and strewed both outside and inside of the hut. Shortly after the Laplanders came home, and asked who had been there; and she answered, "Nobody has been here." "That is wonderful," said they; "we followed the traces close to the hut, and can find none after that." Then they kindled a fire, and made ready their meat, and Gunhild prepared her bed. It had so happened that Gunhild had slept the three nights before, but the Laplanders had watched the one upon the other, being jealous of each other. "Now," she said to the Laplanders, "come here, and lie down one on each side of me." On which they were very glad to do so. She laid an arm round the neck of each, and they went to sleep directly. She roused them up; but they fell to sleep again instantly, and so soundly that she scarcely could waken them. She even raised them up in the bed, and still they slept. Thereupon she took two great seal-skin bags, and put their heads in them, and tied them fast under their arms; and then she gave a wink to the king's men. They run forth with their weapons, kill the two Laplanders, and drag them out of the hut. That same night came such a dreadful thunder-storm that they could not stir. Next morning they came to the ship, taking Gunhild with them, and presented her to Eric. Eric and his followers then sailed southwards to Halogaland; and he sent word to Ozur Tote, the girl's father, to meet him. Eric said he would take his daughter in marriage, to which Ozur Tote consented; and Eric took Gunhild, and went southwards with her.

When King Harald was fifty years of age many of his sons were grown up, and some were dead. Many of them committed acts of great violence in the country, and were in discord among themselves. They drove some of the king's earls out of their properties, and even killed some of them. Then the king called together a numerous Thing in the south part of the country, and summoned to it all the people of the Uplands. At this Thing he gave to all his sons the title of king, and made a law that his descendants in the male line should each succeed to the kingly title and dignity; but his descendants by the female side only to that of earl. And he divided the country among them thus:—Vingulmark, Raumarige, Westfold, and Thelemark, he bestowed on Olaf, Biorn, Sigtryg, Frode, and Thorgil. Hedemark and Gudbrandsdal he gave to Dag, Ring, and Ragnar. To Snæfrid's sons he gave Ringerige, Hadeland, Thoten, and the lands thereto belonging. His son Guttorm, as before mentioned, he had set over the country from Swinesund to the Glommen, and to defend the country eastwards. King Harald himself generally dwelt in the middle of the country, and Rærek and Gudrod were generally with his court, and had great estates in Hordeland and in Sogn. King Eric was also with his father King Harald; and the king loved and regarded him the most of all his sons, and gave him Halogaland, and North Möre, and Raumsdale. North in Drontheim he gave Halfdan the Black, Halfdan the White, and Sigurd land to rule over. In each of these districts he gave his sons the one half of his revenues, together with the right to sit on a high seat,—a step higher than earls, but a step lower than his own high seat. His king's seat each of his sons wanted for himself after his death, but he himself destined it for Eric. The Drontheim people wanted Halfdan the Black to succeed to it. The

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CHAPTER  
XXXV.  
Harald divides his  
kingdom  
among his  
sons.



## SAGA III.

people of Viken, and the Uplands, wanted those under whom they lived. And thereupon new quarrels arose among the brothers; and because they thought their dominions too little, they drove about in piratical expeditions. In this way, as before related, Guttorm fell at the river Quislen, slain by Solve Klofe; upon which Olaf took the kingdom he had possessed. Halfdan the White fell in Eastland, Halfdan Haaleg in Orkney. King Harald gave ships of war to Thorgils and Frode, with which they went westward on a viking cruise, and plundered in Scotland, Ireland, and Bretland. They were the first of the Northmen who took Dublin. It is said that Frode got poisoned drink there; but Thorgil was a long time king over Dublin, until he fell into a snare of the Irish, and was killed.

CHAPTER  
XXXVI.  
Death of  
Rognvald  
Rettilbein.

Eric Bloodyaxe expected to be head king over all his brothers, and King Harald intended he should be so; and the father and son lived long together. Rognvald Rettilbein governed Hadeland, and allowed himself to be instructed in the arts of witchcraft, and became a great warlock. Now King Harald was a hater of all witchcraft. There was a warlock in Hordeland called Vitgeir; and when the king sent a message to him that he should give up his art of witchcraft, he replied in this verse:—

“ The danger surely is not great  
From wizards born of mean estate,  
When Harald’s son in Hadeland,  
King Rognvald, to the art lays hand.”

But when King Harald heard this, King Eric Bloodyaxe went by his orders to the Uplands, and burned his brother Rognvald in a house, along with eighty other warlocks; which work was much praised.

CHAPTER  
XXXVII.  
Of Gudrod  
Liome.

Gudrod Liome was in winter on a friendly visit to his foster-father Thiodolf in Huine, and had a well-manned ship, with which he wanted to go north to

Rogaland. It was blowing a heavy storm at the time ; but Gudrod was bent on sailing, and would not consent to wait. Thiodolf sang thus : — SAGA III.

“ Wait, Gudrod, till the storm is past, —  
 Loose not thy long-ship while the blast  
 Howls over-head so furiously, —  
 Trust not thy long-ship to the sea, —  
 Loose not thy long-ship from the shore :  
 Hark to the ocean’s angry roar !  
 See how the very stones are tost,  
 By raging waves high on the coast !  
 Stay, Gudrod, till the tempest’s o’er —  
 Deep runs the sea off Jeddern’s shore.”

Gudrod set off in spite of what Thiodolf could say ; and when they came off Jedderen the vessel sunk with them, and all on board were lost.

King Harald’s son, Biorn, ruled over Westfold at that time, and generally lived at Tunsberg, and went but little on war expeditions. Tunsberg at that time was much frequented by merchant vessels, both from Viken and the north country, and also from the south, from Denmark, and Saxonland. King Biorn had also merchant ships on voyages to other lands, by which he procured for himself costly articles, and such things as he thought needful ; and therefore his brothers called him the Freightman, and the Merchant. Biorn was a man of sense and understanding, and promised to become a good ruler. He made a good and suitable marriage, and had a son by his wife, who was named Gudrod. Eric Bloodyaxe came from his Baltic cruise with ships of war, and a great force, and required his brother Biorn to deliver to him King Harald’s share of the scatt and incomes of Westfold. But it had always been the custom before, that Biorn himself either delivered the money into the king’s hands, or sent men of his own with it ; and therefore he would continue with the old custom, and would not deliver the money. Eric again wanted provisions, tents, and liquor. The brothers quarrelled about this ;

CHAPTER  
 XXXVIII.  
 King Biorn  
 the Mer-  
 chant’s  
 death.



## SAGA III.

but Eric got nothing, and left the town. Biorn went also out of the town towards evening up to Seaheim. In the night Eric came back after Biorn, and came to Seaheim just as Biorn and his men were seated at table drinking. Eric surrounded the house in which they were; but Biorn with his men went out and fought. Biorn, and many men with him, fell. Eric, on the other hand, got a great booty, and proceeded northwards. But this work was taken very ill by the people of Viken, and Eric was much disliked for it; and the report went that King Olaf would avenge his brother Biorn, whenever opportunity offered. King Biorn lies in the Freightman's mound at Seaheim.\*

CHAPTER  
XXXIX.  
Of the re-  
conciliation  
of the  
kings.

King Eric went in winter northwards to Möre, and was at a feast in Solva, within the point Agdanes†; and when Halfdan heard of it he set out with his men, and surrounded the house in which they were. Eric slept in a room which stood detached by itself, and he escaped into the forest with five others; but Halfdan and his men burnt the main house, with all the people who were in it. With this news Eric came to King Harald, who was very wroth at it, and assembled a great force against the Drontheim people. When Halfdan the Black heard this he levied ships and men, so that he had a great force, and proceeded with it to Stad, within Thorsberg. King Harald lay with his men at Reinplain. Now people went between them, and among others a clever man called Guttorm Sindre, who was then in Halfdan's army, but had been formerly in the service of King Harald, and was a great friend of both. Guttorm was a great scald, and had once composed a song both about the father and the son, for which they had offered him a reward.

\* Seaheim, called afterwards Semb or Sern, is a farm now called Jarlsberg, about two miles from the town of Tunsberg. The Freightman's mound is still to be seen.

† Agdanes is the south point of land at the entrance of the Drontheim fiord.

But he would take nothing; but only asked that, some day or other, they should grant him any request he should make, which they promised to do. Now he presented himself to King Harald, — brought words of peace between them, and made the request to them both that they should be reconciled. So highly did the king esteem him, that in consequence of his request they were reconciled. Many other able men promoted this business as well as he; and it was so settled that Halfdan should retain the whole of his kingdom as he had it before, and should let his brother Eric sit in peace.

Earl Hakon Griotgardsson of Lade had the whole rule over Drontheim when King Harald was any where away in the country; and Hakon stood higher with the king than any in the country of Drontheim. After Hakon's death his son Sigurd succeeded to his power in Drontheim, and was the earl, and had his mansion at Lade. King Harald's sons, Halfdan the Black, and Sigrod, who had been before in the house of his father Earl Hakon, continued to be brought up in his house. The sons of Harald and Sigurd were about the same age. Earl Sigurd was one of the wisest men of his time, and married Bergliot, a daughter of Earl Thorer the Silent; and her mother was Alof Aarbot, a daughter of Harald Haarfager. When King Harald began to grow old he generally dwelt on some of his great farms in Hordaland; namely, Alrekstad, or Sæim, Fitjar, Utstein, or Augvaldsness in the island Kormt. When Harald was seventy years of age he begat a son with a girl called Thora Mosterstang, because her family came from Moster. She was descended from good people, being connected with Horda-Kaare; and was moreover a very stout and remarkably handsome girl. She was called the king's servant girl; for at that time many were subject to service to the king who were of good

CHAPTER  
XL.  
Birth of  
Hakon the  
Good.



## SAGA III.

birth, both men and women. Then it was the custom, with people of consideration, to choose with great care the man who should pour water over their children, and give them a name. Now when the time came that Thora, who was then at Moster, expected her confinement, she would go to King Harald, who was then living at Sæim; and she went northwards in a ship belonging to Earl Sigurd. They lay at night close to the land; and there Thora brought forth a child upon the land, up among the rocks, close to the ship's gangway, and it was a man child. Earl Sigurd poured water over him, and called him Hakon\*, after his own father, Hakon earl of Lade. The boy soon grew handsome, large in size, and very like his father King Harald. King Harald let him follow his mother, and they were both in the king's house as long as he was an infant.

CHAPTER  
XLI.  
King  
Athelstan's  
message.

At this time a king called Athelstan had taken the kingdom of England. He sent men to Norway to King Harald, with the errand that the messengers should present him with a sword, with the hilt and

\* It may be doubted if baptism with water was really an observance in the Odin religion. It could have no meaning to the Odin worshippers; and if really used must have been borrowed from Christianity, and used as a charm. It is very possible that all the passages about pouring water over a child, on giving it a name, are interpolated by the scald in relating the sagas, in order to avoid the awkwardness of making the immediate ancestors of those to whom he was relating them heathens who had died unbaptized. We find those who attained power and transmitted it to their descendants have had water poured over them at their birth; but of others nothing of the kind is related. Harald Haarfager, this Hakon, Olaf, Magnus, are stated to have been thus baptized; but we hear nothing of the baptism of any of Haarfager's other sons, who happened not to leave posterity in power after Christianity was established. Eric Bloodyaxe, his favourite and eldest son, appears not to have been baptized. Baptism does not appear connected with any thing in the Odin religion that we can gather from the Eddas. It is possibly a courtly compliment of the scald, to have given his heroes this Christian rite in telling their story to their Christianised descendants. We find, in Chapter 43., that Athelstan had Hakon baptized and instructed in the Christian faith; so that this first baptism seems doubtful.

SAGA III.

handle gilt, and also the whole sheath adorned with gold and silver, and set with precious jewels. The ambassadors presented the sword-hilt to the king, saying, "Here is a sword which King Athelstan sends thee, with the request that thou wilt accept it." The king took the sword by the handle; whereupon the ambassadors said, "Now thou hast taken the sword according to our king's desire, and therefore art thou his subject, as thou hast taken his sword." King Harald saw now that this was a jest, for he would be subject to no man. But he remembered it was his rule, whenever any thing raised his anger, to collect himself, and let his passion run off, and then take the matter into consideration coolly. Now he did so, and consulted his friends, who all gave him the advice to let the ambassadors, in the first place, go home in safety.

The following summer King Harald sent a ship westward to England, and gave the command of it to Hauk Haabrok. He was a great warrior, and very dear to the king. Into his hands he gave his son Hakon. Hauk proceeded westward to England, and found the king in London, where there was just at the time a great feast and entertainment. When they came to the hall, Hauk told his men how they should conduct themselves; namely, that he who went first in should go last out, and all should stand in a row at the table, at equal distance from each other; and each should have his sword at his left side, but should fasten his cloak so that his sword should not be seen. Then they went into the hall, thirty in number. Hauk went up to the king and saluted him, and the king bade him welcome. Then Hauk took the child Hakon, and set it on the king's knee. The king looks at the boy, and asks Hauk what the meaning of this is. Hauk replies, "Harald the king bids thee foster his servant-girl's child." The

CHAPTER  
XLII.  
Hauk's  
journey to  
England.



## SAGA III.

king was in great anger, and seized a sword which lay beside him, and drew it, as if he was going to kill the child. Hauk says, "Thou hast borne him on thy knee, and thou canst murder him if thou wilt; but thou wilt not make an end of all King Harald's sons by so doing." On that Hauk went out with all his men, and took the way direct to his ship, and put to sea,—for they were ready,—and came back to King Harald. The king was highly pleased with this; for it is the common observation of all people, that the man who fosters another's children is of less consideration than the other. From these transactions between the two kings, it appears that each wanted to be held greater than the other; but in truth there was no injury to the dignity of either, for each was the upper king in his own kingdom till his dying day.

CHAPTER  
XLIII.  
Hakon, the  
foster-son  
of Athel-  
stan, is bap-  
tized.

King Athelstan had Hakon baptized, and brought up in the right faith, and in good habits, and all sorts of exercises, and he loved Hakon above all his relations; and Hakon was beloved by all men. Athelstan was a man of understanding and eloquence, and also a good Christian. King Athelstan gave Hakon a sword, of which the hilt and handle were gold, and the blade still better; for with it Hakon cut down a mill-stone to the centre eye, and the sword thereafter was called the Quernbiter. Better sword never came into Norway, and Hakon carried it to his dying day.

CHAPTER  
XLIV.  
Eric is  
brought to  
the sove-  
reignty.

When King Harald was eighty years of age he became very heavy, and unable to travel through the country, or do the business of a king. Then he brought his son Eric to his high seat, and gave him the power and command over the whole land. Now when King Harald's other sons heard this, King Halfdan the Black also took a king's high seat, and took all Drontheim land, with the consent of all the

\* Quern is still the name of the small hand mill-stones still found in use among the cottars in Orkney, Shetland, and the Hebrides.

SAGA III.

people, under his rule as upper king. After the death of Biorn the Merchant, his brother Olaf took the command over Westfold, and took Biorn's son, Gudrod, as his foster-child. Olaf's son was called Tryggve; and the two foster-bothers were about the same age, and were hopeful and clever. Tryggve, especially, was remarkable as a stout and strong man. Now when the people of Viken heard that those of Horden had taken Eric as upper king, they did the same, and made Olaf the upper king in Viken, which kingdom he retained. Eric did not like this at all. Two years after this, Halfdan the Black died suddenly at a feast in Drontheim, and the general report was, that Gunhild had bribed a witch to give him a death-drink. Thereafter the Drontheim people took Sigrod to be their king.

King Harald lived three years after he gave Eric the supreme authority over his kingdom, and lived mostly on his great farms which he possessed, some in Rogaland, and some in Hordaland. Eric and Gunhild had a son, on whom King Harald poured water, and gave him his own name, and the promise that he should be king after his father Eric. King Harald married most of his daughters within the country to his earls, and from them many great families are descended. King Harald died on a bed of sickness in Rogaland, and was buried under a mound at Hougar in Kormsund. In Hougasund is a church, now standing; and not far from the churchyard, at the north-west side, is King Harald Haarfager's mound; but his grave-stone stands west of the church, and is thirteen feet and a half high, and two ells broad. The grave, mound, and stone, are there to the present day.\* Harald Haarfager was, according to the report

CHAPTER  
XLV.  
King Harald's death.

\* The stone and some remains of the mound are still to be seen at Gar, or the Gaard, the principal farm-house in the parish of Kormsund.



SAGA III. of men of knowledge, of remarkably handsome appearance, great and strong, and very generous and affable to his men. He was a great warrior in his youth; and people think that this was foretold by his mother's dream before his birth, as the lowest part of the tree she dreamt of was red as blood. The stem again was green and beautiful, which betokened his flourishing kingdom; and that the tree was white at the top showed that he should reach a grey-haired old age. The branches and twigs showed forth his posterity, spread over the whole land: for of his race, ever since, Norway has always had kings.\*

CHAPTER  
XLVI.  
The death  
of Olaf  
and of  
Sigrod.

King Eric took all the revenues which the king had in the middle of the country, the next winter after King Harald's decease. But Olaf took all the revenues eastward in Viken, and their brother Sigrod all that of the Drontheim country. Eric was very ill pleased with this; and the report went that he would attempt with force to get the sole sovereignty over the country, in the same way as his father had given it to him. Now when Olaf and Sigrod heard this, messengers passed between them; and after appointing a meeting place, Sigrod went eastward in spring to Viken, and he and his brother Olaf met at Tunsberg, and remained there a while. The same spring King Eric levied a great force, and ships, and steered towards Viken. He got such a strong steady gale that he sailed night and day, and came faster than the news of him. When he came to Tunsberg, Olaf and Sigrod, with their forces, went out of the town a little eastward to a ridge, where they drew up their men in battle order; but as Eric had many more men, he won the battle. Both brothers, Olaf and Sigrod, fell there; and both their grave-mounds

\* According to Schöning, Harald Haarfager died in 936. His son Hakon was born 923, and sent to England in 931. Athelstan of England died, according to the Saxon Chronicle, in October, 941.

are upon the ridge where they fell. Then King Eric went through Viken, and subdued it, and remained far into summer. Gudrod and Tryggve fled to the Uplands. Eric was a stout handsome man, strong, and very manly,—a great and fortunate man of war; but bad-minded, gruff, unfriendly, and silent. Gunhild, his wife, was the most beautiful of women,—clever, with much knowledge, and lively; but a very false person, and very cruel in disposition. The children of King Eric and Gunhild were, Gamle, the oldest; then Guttorm, Harald, Ragnfrid, Ragnhild, Erling, Gudrod, and Sigurd Sleve. All were handsome, and of manly appearance.



## IV.

## SAGA IV.

## HAKON THE GOOD'S SAGA.

CHAPTER  
I.  
Hakon  
chosen  
king.

HAKON\*, Athelstan's foster-son, was in England at the time he heard of his father King Harald's death, and he immediately made himself ready to depart. King Athelstan gave him men, and a choice of good ships, and fitted him out for his journey most excellently. In harvest time he came to Norway, where he heard of the death of his brothers, and that King Eric was then in Viken. Then Hakon sailed northwards to Drontheim, where he went to Sigurd earl of Lade, who was the ablest man in Norway. He gave Hakon a good reception; and they made a league with each other, by which Hakon promised great power to Sigurd if he was made king. They assembled then a numerous Thing, and Sigurd the earl recommended Hakon's cause to the Thing†, and proposed him to the bonders as king. Then Hakon himself stood up and spoke; and the people said to each other, two and two, as they heard him, "Harald Haarfager is come again, and grown young." The beginning of Hakon's speech was, that he offered himself to the bonders as king, and desired from them the title of king, and aid and forces to defend the kingdom. He promised, on the other hand, to make all the bonders udal-holders, and give every man udal rights to the land he lived on. This speech met such joyful applause,

\* Hakon the Good, Athelstan's foster-son, reigned from about the year 937 to the year 961.

† This reference to a Thing appears from the saga to have been necessary, whatever the claim from hereditary right by succession may have been to the kingdom.

that the whole public cried and shouted that they would take him to be king. And so it was that the Drontheim people took Hakon, who was then fifteen years old, for king; and he took a court or body-guard, and servants, and proceeded through the country. The news reached the Uplands that the people in Drontheim had taken to themselves a king, who in every respect was like King Harald Haarfager,—with the difference, that Harald had made all the people of the land vassals\*, and unfree; but this Hakon wished well to every man, and offered the bonders to give them their udal rights again, which Harald had taken from them. All were rejoiced at this news, and it passed from mouth to mouth,—it flew, like fire in dry grass, through the whole land, and eastward to the land's end. Many bonders came from the Uplands to meet King Hakon. Some sent messages, some tokens; and all to the same effect—that his men they would be: and the king received all thankfully.

Early in winter, the king went to the Uplands, and summoned the people to a Thing; and there streamed all to him who could come. He was proclaimed king at every Thing; and then he proceeded eastward to Viken, where his brother's sons, Tryggve and Gudrod, and many others, came unto him, and complained of the sorrow and evil his brother Eric had wrought. The hatred to King Eric grew more and more, the more liking all men took to King Hakon; and they got more boldness to say what they thought. King Hakon gave Tryggve and Gudrod the title of kings, and the dominions which King Harald had bestowed on their fathers.† Tryggve got Ranrige and Vingul-

CHAPTER  
II.  
King  
Hakon's  
progress  
through the  
country.

\* The policy of Harald Haarfager had evidently been to introduce the feudal system into his kingdom, and it failed by his sons requiring their udal right to equal shares in the kingdom.

† Tryggve and Gudrod were grandsons of Haarfager.



## SAGA IV.

mark, and Gudrod Westfold ; but as they were young, and in the years of childhood, he appointed able men to rule the land for them. He gave them the country on the same conditions as it had been given before,—that they should have half of the scatt and revenues with him. Towards spring King Hakon returned north, over the Uplands, to Drontheim.

CHAPTER  
III.  
Eric's departure  
from the  
country.

King Hakon, early in spring, collected a great army at Drontheim, and fitted out ships. The people of Viken had also a great force on foot, and intended to join Hakon. King Eric also levied people in the middle of the country ; but it went badly with him to gather people, for the leading men left him, and went over to Hakon. As he saw himself not nearly strong enough to oppose Hakon, he sailed out to the West sea with such men as would follow him. He first sailed to Orkney, and took many people with him from that country ; and then went south towards England, plundering in Scotland, and in the north parts of England, wherever he could land. Athelstan, the king of England, sent a message to Eric, offering him dominions under him in England ; saying that King Harald his father was a good friend of King Athelstan, and therefore he would do kindly towards his sons. Messengers passed between the two kings ; and it came to an agreement that King Eric should take Northumberland as a fief from King Athelstan, and which land he should defend against the Danes or other vikings. Eric should let himself be baptized, together with his wife and children, and all the people who had followed him. Eric accepted this offer, and was baptized, and adopted the right faith. Northumberland is called a fifth part of England. Eric had his residence at York, where Lodbrok's sons, it was said, had formerly been, and Northumberland was principally inhabited by Northmen. Since Lodbrok's sons had taken the country, Danes and Northmen

often plundered there, when the power of the land was out of their hands. Many names of places in the country are Norwegian; as Grimsby\*, Haukflot, and many others.

SAGA IV.

King Eric had many people about him, for he kept many Northmen who had come with him from the East; and also many of his friends had joined him from Norway. But as he had little land, he went on a cruise every summer, and plundered in Shetland, the Hebrides, Iceland, and Bretland, by which he gathered property. King Athelstan died on a sick bed, after a reign of fourteen years, eight weeks, and three days.† After him his brother Jatmund‡ was king of England, and he was no friend to the Northmen. King Eric, also, was in no great favour with him; and the word went about that King Edmund would set another chief over Northumberland. Now when King Eric heard this, he set off on a viking cruise to the westward; and from the Orkneys took with him the Earls Arnkel and Erlend, the sons of Earl Torf-Einar. Then he sailed to the Hebrides, where there were many vikings and troop-kings, who joined their men to his. With all this force he steered to Ireland first, where he took with him all the men he could, and then to Bretland, and plundered; and sailed thereafter south to England§, and marauded there as elsewhere. The people fled before him wherever he appeared. As King Eric was a bold warrior, and had a great force, he trusted so

CHAPTER  
IV.  
Eric's  
death.

\* Grimsbæ is no doubt Grimsby. Haukflot is not now the name of any place known generally.

† According to the Saxon Chronicle, Athelstan died in the year 941, after a reign of fourteen years and ten weeks. Florence of Whitehorn, who lived about the year 1110, places his death in 940, after a reign of sixteen years.

‡ Jatmund, Edmund, Eadmund, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, — a difference in pronunciation of the same name.

§ England is applied to the parts occupied by the Anglo-Saxons, and Bretland to the parts occupied by the Welsh and ancient Britons.



## SAGA IV.

much to his people that he penetrated far inland in the country, following and plundering the fugitives. King Edmund had set a king, who was called Olaf, to defend the land; and he gathered an innumerable mass of people, with whom he marched against King Eric. A dreadful battle\* ensued, in which many Englishmen fell; but for one who fell came three in his place out of the country behind, and when evening came on the loss of men turned on the side of the Northmen, and many people fell. Towards the end of the day, King Eric and five kings with him fell. Three of them were Guttorm and his two sons, Ivar and Harek: there fell, also, Sigurd and Ragnvald; and with them Torf-Einar's two sons, Arnkel and Erlend. Besides these, there was a great slaughter of Northmen; and those who escaped went to Northumberland, and brought the news to Gunhild and her sons.

CHAPTER  
V.  
Gunhild  
and her  
sons.

When Gunhild and her sons knew for certain that King Eric had fallen, after having plundered the land of the King of England, they thought there was no peace to be expected for them; and they made themselves ready to depart from Northumberland, with all the ships King Eric had left, and all the men who would follow them. They took also all the loose property, and goods which they had gathered partly as taxes in England, partly as booty on their expeditions. With their army they first steered northward to Orkney, where Thorfin Hausakliffer was earl, a son of Torf-Einar, and took up their station there for a time. Eric's sons subdued these islands and Shetland, took scatt for themselves, and staid there all the winter; but went on viking cruises in summer to the West, and plundered in Scotland and Ireland. About this Glum Geirason sings:—

\* This battle, according to the Saxon Chronicle, took place 944. It mentions the fall of a Regenald—Rognvald—and an Aulaf.

“ The hero who knows well to ride  
 The sea-horse\* o’er the foaming tide,—  
 He who in boyhood wild rode o’er  
 The seaman’s horse to Scania’s shore,  
 And showed the Danes his galley’s bow,  
 Right nobly scours the ocean now.  
 On Scotland’s coast he lights the brand  
 Of flaming war ; with conquering hand  
 Drives many a Scottish warrior tall  
 To the bright seats in Odin’s hall.  
 The fire-spark, by the fiend of war  
 Fanned to a flame, soon spreads afar.  
 Crowds trembling fly,—the southern foes  
 Fall thick beneath the hero’s blows :  
 The hero’s blade drips red with gore,  
 Staining the green sward on the shore.”

SAGA IV.

When King Eric had left the country, King Hakon, Athelstan’s foster-son, subdued the whole of Norway. The first winter he visited the western parts, and then went north, and settled in Drontheim. But as no peace could be reasonably looked for so long as King Eric with his forces could come to Norway from the West sea, he set himself with his men-at-arms in the middle of the country,—in the Fiorde district, or in Sogn, or Hordaland, or Rogaland. Hakon placed Sigurd earl of Lade over the whole Drontheim district, as he and his father had before had it under Harald Haarfager. When King Hakon heard of his brother Eric’s death, and also that his sons had no footing in England, he thought there was not much to fear from them, and he went with his troops one summer eastward to Viken. At that time the Danes plundered often in Viken, and wrought much evil there ; but when they heard that King Hakon was come with a great army, they got out of the way, — some to Sealand, or to Halland\* ;

CHAPTER  
 VI.  
 Battle in  
 Jutland.

\* The sea-horse, the ocean steed, &c., are common expressions for a ship,—probably from many having had the figure-head of a horse on the bow.

† Halland was part of the present Sweden. Denmark extended over the provinces of Scania, Halland, and Bleiking, on the north or Swedish side of the Sound, in the earliest times, and down to a late period.



## SAGA IV.

and those who were nearest to King Hakon went out to sea, and over to Jutland. When the king heard of this, he sailed after them with all his army. On arriving at Jutland he plundered all round; and when the country people heard of it, they assembled in a great body, and determined to defend their land, and fight. There was a great battle; and King Hakon fought so boldly, that he went forward before his banner without helmet or coat of mail. King Hakon won the victory, and drove the fugitives far up the country. So says Guttorm Sindre, in his song of Hakon:—

“ Furrowing the deep-blue sea with oars,  
The king pursues to Jutland’s shores.  
They met; and in the battle storm  
Of clashing shields, full many a form  
Of goodly warrior on the plain,  
Full many a corpse by Hakon slain,  
Glutted the ravens, who from far,  
Scenting the banquet-feast of war,  
Came in black flocks to Jutland’s plains  
To drink the blood-wine from the veins.”

CHAPTER  
VII.  
Battle in  
the Sound.

Then Hakon steered southwards with his fleet to seek the vikings, and so on to Sealand. He rowed with two cutters into the Sound, where he found eleven viking ships, and instantly attacked them. It ended in his gaining the victory, and clearing the viking ships of all their men. So says Guttorm Sindre:—

“ Hakon the Brave, whose skill all know  
To bend in battle storm the bow,  
Rushed o’er the waves to Sealand’s tongue,  
His two war-ships with gilt shields hung,  
And cleared the decks with his blue sword  
That rules the fate of war, on board  
Eleven ships of the Vendland men,—  
Famous is Hakon’s name since then.”

CHAPTER  
VIII.  
King Ha-  
kon’s ex-  
pedition in  
Denmark.

Thereafter King Hakon carried war far and wide in Sealand; plundering some, slaying others, taking some prisoners of war, taking ransom from others,—and all

without opposition. Then Hakon proceeded along the coast of Scania, pillaging every where, levying taxes and ransoms from the country, and killing all vikings, both Danish and Vendish.\* He then went eastwards to the island of Gotland, marauded there, and took great ransom from the country. So says Guttorm Sindre : —

SAGA IV.

“ Hakon, who midst the battle shock  
 Stands like a firmly-rooted oak,  
 Subdued all Sealand with the sword ;  
 From Vendland vikings the sea-bord  
 Of Scania swept ; and, with the shield  
 Of Odin clad, made Gotland yield  
 A ransom of the ruddy gold,  
 Which Hakon to his war-men bold  
 Gave with free hand, who in his feud  
 Against the arrow-storm had stood.”

King Hakon returned back in autumn with his army and an immense booty ; and remained all the winter in Viken to defend it against the Danes and Gotlanders, if they should attack it.

In the same winter King Tryggve Olafsson returned from a viking cruise in the West sea, having before ravaged in Scotland and Ireland. In spring King Hakon went north, and set his brother's son, King Tryggve, over Viken† to defend that country against enemies. He gave him also in property all that he could reconquer of the country in Denmark‡, which the summer before King Hakon had subjected to payment of scatt to him. So says Guttorm : —

CHAPTER  
 IX.  
 Of King  
 Tryggve.

“ King Hakon, whose sharp sword dyes red  
 The bright steel cap on many a head,  
 Has set a warrior brave and stout  
 The foreign foeman to keep out,—

---

\* Vendland and Vender mean the country and people along the Baltic coast from Saxland and Holstein eastwards ; and seems to have included Mecklenburg, Pomerania, and Prussia on the Baltic.

† Viken, the country north of the Gotha river, forming the great bight of the coast of Norway.

‡ Scania, on the Swedish side of the Sound, was called Denmark, as well as the islands and Jutland.



## SAGA IV.

To keep that green land safe from war  
Which black Night bore to dwarf Onar.\*  
For many a carle whose trade's to wield  
The battle-axe, and swing the shield,  
On the swan's ocean-scates† has come,  
In white-winged ships, across the foam,—  
Across the sea, from far Ireland,  
To war against the Norseman's land."

CHAPTER  
X.  
Of Gun-  
hild's sons.

King Harald Gormson ruled over Denmark at that time. He took it much amiss that King Hakon had made war in his dominions, and the report went that he would take revenge; but this did not take place so soon. When Gunhild and her sons heard there was enmity between Denmark and Norway, they began to turn their course from the West. They married King Eric's daughter, Ragnhild, to Arnfin, a son of Torfin Hausakliffer; and as soon as Eric's sons went away, Thorfin took the earldom again over the Orkney Islands. Gamle Ericson was somewhat older than the other brothers, but still he was not a grown man. When Gunhild and her sons came from the westward to Denmark, they were well received by King Harald. He gave them great fiefs in his kingdom, so that they could maintain themselves and their men very well. He also took Harald Ericson to be his foster-son, set him on his knee‡, and thereafter he was brought up at the Danish king's court. Some of Eric's sons went out on viking expeditions as soon as they were old enough, and gathered property, ravaging all around in the East sea. They grew up quickly to be handsome men, and far beyond their years in strength and perfection. Glum Geirason tells of one of them in the Graafeld song: —

\* The dwarf Onar was the husband of Night, and Earth was their daughter.

† Figurative expressions for ships.

‡ Setting the child on the knee of the foster-father appears to have been the symbol of adoption.

“ I’ve heard that, on the Eastland coast,  
Great victories were won and lost.  
The king, whose hand is ever graced  
With gift to scald, his banner placed  
On, and still on ; while, midst the play  
Of swords, sung sharp his good sword’s sway.  
As strong in arm as free of gold,  
He thinn’d the ranks of warriors bold.”

SAGA IV.

Then Eric’s sons turned northwards with their troops to Viken ; but King Tryggve kept troops on foot with which he met them, and they had many a battle, in which the victory was sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other. Sometimes Eric’s sons plundered in Viken, and sometimes Tryggve in Sealand and Halland.

As long as Hakon was king in Norway, there was good peace between the bonders and merchants ; so that none did harm either to the life or goods of the other. Good seasons also there were, both by sea and land. King Hakon was of a remarkably cheerful disposition, clever in words, and very condescending. He was a man of great understanding also, and bestowed attention on lawgiving. He gave out the Gula Thing’s laws on the advice of Thorlief the Wise ; also the Froste Thing’s laws on the advice of Earl Sigurd, and of other Drontheim men of wisdom. Eidsvold Thing laws were first established in the country by Halfdan the Black, the father of Harald Haarfager.\*

CHAPTER  
XI.  
King Ha-  
kon’s dis-  
position  
and go-  
vernment.

King Hakon kept Yule at Drontheim, and Earl Sigurd had made a feast for him at Lade. The night of the first day of Yule the earl’s wife, Bergliot, was brought to bed of a boy-child, which afterwards King Hakon poured water over, and gave him his own name. The boy grew up, and became in his day a mighty

CHAPTER  
XII.  
The birth  
of Earl  
Hakon the  
Great.

\* Owing to the different means of subsistence in so vast an extent of country, each of the five great Law Things appears to have had laws suitable for its own locality ; and the District Things, with their lagman, to have administered these laws.



## SAGA IV.

and able man, and was earl after his father, who was King Hakon's dearest friend.

CHAPTER  
XIII.  
Of Eystein  
the Bad.

Eystein, a king of the Uplands, whom some called the Great, and some the Bad, once on a time made war in Drontheim\*, and subdued Eyna district and Sparbo district, and set his own son Onund over them; but the Drontheim people killed him. Then King Eystein made another inroad into Drontheim, and ravaged the land far and wide, and subdued it. He then offered the people either his slave, who was called Thorer Faxe, or his dog, whose name was Sauer, to be their king. They preferred the dog, as they thought they would sooner get rid of him. Now the dog was, by witchcraft, gifted with three men's wisdom; and when he barked, he spoke one word and barked two. A collar and chain of gold and silver were made for him, and his courtiers carried him in their hands when the weather or ways were foul. A throne was erected for him, and he sat upon a high place, as kings are used to sit. He dwelt in Inderöen, and had his mansion in a place now called Saurshoug. It is told that the occasion of his death was that the wolves one day broke into his fold, and his courtiers stirred him up to defend his cattle; but when he ran down from his mound, and attacked the wolves, they tore him to pieces. Many other extraordinary things were done by this King Eystein against the Drontheim people, and in consequence of this persecution and trouble, many chiefs and people fled and left their udal properties.

CHAPTER  
XIV.  
The colo-  
nising of

Ketil Jemte, a son of Earl Onund of Sparbo, went eastward across the mountain ridge, and with him a

\* Drontheim here, and in all the sagas, means not the present town of Drontheim, which was not founded until Olaf Trygvesson's reign, and is always called Nidaros,—that is, the mouth of the river Nid,—and sometimes, as if contemptuously, the Kiopstad, the merchant town; but Drontheim means the whole district on each side of the Drontheim fiord, which is 120 miles in length.

great multitude, who took all their farm-stock and goods with them. They cleared the woods, and established large farms, and settled the country afterwards called Jemteland. Thorer Helsing, Ketil's grandson, on account of a murder, ran away from Jemteland, and fled eastward through the forest, and settled there. Many people followed; and that country, which extends eastward down to the sea-coast, was called Helsingland; and its eastern parts are inhabited by Swedes. Now when Harald Haarfager took possession of the whole country many people fled before him, both people of Drontheim and of Numedal districts; and thus new settlers came to Jemteland, and some all the way to Helsingland. The Helsingland people travelled into Sweden for their merchandise, and thus became altogether subjects of that country. The Jemteland people, again, were in a manner between the two countries; and nobody cared about them, until Hakon entered into friendly intercourse with Jemteland, and made friends of the more powerful people. Then they resorted to him, and promised him obedience and payment of taxes, and became his subjects; for they saw nothing but what was good in him, and being of Norwegian race they would rather stand under his royal authority than under the king of Sweden: and he gave them laws, and rights to their land. All the people of Helsingland did the same, — that is, all who were of Norwegian race, from the other side of the great mountain ridge.

King Hakon was a good Christian when he came to Norway; but as the whole country was heathen, with much heathenish sacrifice, and as many great people, as well as the favour of the common people, were to be conciliated, he resolved to practise his Christian ty in private. But he kept Sundays, and the Friday fasts, and some token of the greatest holydays. He made a law that the festival of Yule should begin at

SAGA IV.

Jemteland  
and Hel-  
singland.

CHAPTER  
XV.  
King Ha-  
kon up-  
holds and  
spreads  
Chris-  
tianity.



## SAGA IV.

the same time as Christian people held it, and that every man, under penalty, should brew a meal\* of malt into ale, and therewith keep the Yule holy as long as it lasted. Before him, the beginning of Yule, or the slaughter night†, was the night of mid-winter, and Yule was kept for three days thereafter. It was his intent, as soon as he had set himself fast in the land, and had subjected the whole to his power, to introduce Christianity. He went to work first by enticing to Christianity the men who were dearest to him; and many, out of friendship to him, allowed themselves to be baptized, and some laid aside sacrifices. He dwelt long in the Drontheim district, for the strength of the country lay there; and when he thought that, by the support of some powerful people there, he could set up Christianity, he sent a message to England for a bishop and other teachers; and when they arrived in Norway, Hakon made it known that he would proclaim Christianity over all the land. The people of Möre and Raumsdal referred the matter to the people of Drontheim. King Hakon then had several churches consecrated, and put priests into them; and when he came to Drontheim he summoned the bonders to a Thing, and invited them to accept Christianity. They gave an answer to the effect that they would defer the matter until the Froste Thing, at which there would be men from every district of the Drontheim country, and then they would give their determination upon this difficult matter.

CHAPTER  
XVI.  
About  
sacrifices.

Sigurd, earl of Lade, was one of the greatest men for sacrifices, and so had Hakon his father been; and Sigurd always presided on account of the king at all

\* A maling, or meal, is a measure of grain still used in Orkney.

† Högg nött, or mid-winter night, at which the Yule of Odin worshippers began, is supposed by Olavius to have taken its name from the slaughtering, hogging, or hewing down cattle on that night for the festival. Hogmaney night is still the name in Edinburgh for the first night of Yule among the common people.

the festivals of sacrifice in the Drontheim country. It was an old custom, that when there was to be sacrifice all the bonders should come to the spot where the temple stood, and bring with them all that they required while the festival of the sacrifice lasted. To this festival all the men brought ale with them; and all kinds of cattle, as well as horses, were slaughtered, and all the blood that came from them was called *laut*, and the vessels in which it was collected were called *laut-vessels*. *Laut-staves* were made, like sprinkling brushes, with which the whole of the altars and the temple walls, both outside and inside, were sprinkled over, and also the people were sprinkled with the blood; but the flesh was boiled into savoury meat for those present. The fire was in the middle of the floor of the temple, and over it hung the kettles, and the full goblets were handed across the fire; and he who made the feast, and was a chief, blessed the full goblets, and all the meat of the sacrifice. And first Odin's goblet was emptied for victory and power to his king; thereafter, Niord's and Freya's goblets for peace and a good season. Then it was the custom of many to empty the *braga-goblet*\*; and then the guests emptied a goblet to the memory of departed friends, called the *remembrance-goblet*. Sigurd the earl was an open-handed man, who did what was very much celebrated; namely, he made a great sacrifice festival at Lade, of which he paid all the expenses. Kormak Ogmundson sings of it in his ballad of Sigurd: —

“ Of cup or platter need has none  
The guest who seeks the generous one, —  
Sigurd the Generous, who can trace  
His lineage from the giant race;  
For Sigurd's hand is bounteous, free, —  
The guardian of the temples he.

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\* The *braga-goblet*, over which vows were made.



## SAGA IV.

He loves the gods,—his liberal hand  
Scatters his sword's gains o'er the land."

CHAPTER  
XVII.  
The Thing  
at Froste.

King Hakon came to the Froste Thing, at which a vast multitude of people were assembled. And when the Thing was seated, the king spoke to the people, and began his speech with saying,—it was his message and entreaty to the bonders and householding men, both great and small, and to the whole public in general, young and old, rich and poor, women as well as men, that they should all allow themselves to be baptized, and should believe in one God, and in Christ the son of Mary; and refrain from all sacrifices and heathen gods; and should keep holy the seventh day, and abstain from all work on it, and keep a fast on the seventh day. As soon as the king had proposed this to the bonders, great was the murmur and noise among the crowd. They complained that the king wanted to take their labour and their old faith from them, and the land could not be cultivated in that way. The labouring men and slaves thought that they could not work if they did not get meat; and they said it was the character of King Hakon, and his father, and all the family, to be generous enough with their money, but sparing with their diet. Asbiorn of Midalhouse in the Gaulardal stood up, and answered thus to the king's proposal:—

“ We bonders, King Hakon, when we elected thee to be our king, and got back our udal rights at the Thing held in Drontheim, thought we had got into heaven; but now we don't know whether we have really got back our freedom, or whether thou wishest to make vassals of us again by this extraordinary proposal—that we should abandon the ancient faith which our fathers and forefathers have held from the oldest times, in the times when the dead were burnt, as well as since that they are laid under mounds, and which, although they were braver than the people of

our days, has served us as a faith to the present time. We have also held thee so dear, that we have allowed thee to rule and give law and right to all the country. And even now we bonders will unanimously hold by the law which thou givest us here in the Froste Thing, and to which we have also given our assent\*; and we will follow thee, and have thee for our king, as long as there is a living man among us bonders here in this Thing assembled. But thou, king, must use some moderation towards us, and only require from us such things as we can obey thee in, and are not impossible for us. If, however, thou wilt take up this matter with a high hand, and wilt try thy power and strength against us, we bonders have resolved among ourselves to part with thee, and to take to ourselves some other chief, who will so conduct himself towards us that we can freely and safely enjoy that faith that suits our own inclinations. Now, king, thou must choose one or other of these conditions before the Thing is ended."

The bonders gave loud applause to this speech, and said it expressed their will, and they would stand or fall by what had been spoken. When silence was again restored, Earl Sigurd said, "It is King Hakon's will to give way to you, the bonders, and never to separate himself from your friendship." The bonders replied, that it was their desire that the king should offer a sacrifice for peace and a good year, as his father was wont to do; and thereupon the noise and tumult ceased, and the Thing was concluded. Earl Sigurd spoke to the king afterwards, and advised him not to refuse altogether to do as the people desired, saying there was nothing else for it but to give way to the will of the bonders; "for it is, as thou hast heard thyself, the will and earnest

\* Our yea. The assent of the people in old times to the laws and the power of the Froste Thing, are as well defined as in our Parliament in this speech.



## SAGA IV.

CHAPTER  
XVIII.

The peasants force  
King Hakon to offer  
sacrifices.

desire of the head-people, as well as of the multitude. Hereafter we may find a good way to manage it." And in this resolution the king and earl agreed.

The harvest thereafter, towards the winter season, there was a festival of sacrifice at Lade, and the king came to it. It had always been his custom before, when he was present at a place where there was sacrifice, to take his meals in a little house by himself, or with some few of his men; but the bonders grumbled that he did not seat himself on his throne at these the most joyous of the meetings of the people. The earl said that the king should do so this time. The king accordingly sat upon his throne. Now when the first full goblet was filled, Earl Sigurd spoke some words over it, blessed it in Odin's name, and drank to the king out of the horn; and the king then took it, and made the sign of the cross over it. Then said Kaare of Gryting, "What does the king mean by doing so? Will he not sacrifice?" Earl Sigurd replies, "The king is doing what all of you do, who trust to your power and strength. He is blessing the full goblet in the name of Thor, by making the sign of his hammer over it before he drinks it." On this there was quietness for the evening. The next day, when the people sat down to table, the bonders pressed the king strongly to eat of horse-flesh\*; and as he would on no account do so, they wanted him to drink of the soup; and as he would not do this, they insisted he should at least taste the gravy; and on his refusal they were going to lay hands on him. Earl Sigurd

\* This eating of horse-flesh at these religious festivals was considered the most direct proof of paganism in the following times, and was punished by death or mutilation by Saint Olaf. It was a ceremony apparently commemorative of their Asiatic origin and ancestors. In Norway, or in Iceland, where horse-flesh also was eaten at these pagan festivals, the horse is not an animal that could ever have been in common use for food, as in the plains of Asia; because it cannot, as in Asia, be easily reared and subsisted. This is perhaps the strongest proof of the truth of the saga tradition of Odin having come into Scandinavia from the banks of the Don—the Tanais.

SAGA IV.  

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came and made peace among them, by asking the king to hold his mouth over the handle of the kettle, upon which the fat smoke of the boiled horse-flesh had settled itself; and the king first laid a linen cloth over the handle, and then gaped over it, and returned to the throne; but neither party was satisfied with this.

CHAPTER  
XIX.  
Feast of the  
sacrifice at  
Möre.

The winter thereafter the king prepared a Yule feast in Möre, and eight chiefs resolved with each other to meet at it. Four of them were from without the Drontheim district — namely, Kaare of Gryting, Asbiorn of Midalhouse, Thorberg of Varnæs, and Orm from Lyra; and from the Drontheim district, Blotolf of Olvishoug, Narfe of Staf in Værdal, Thrاند Hake from Egge, and Thorer Skeg from Husaboe in Inderöen. These eight men bound themselves, the four first to root out Christianity in Norway, and the four others to oblige the king to offer sacrifice to the gods. The four first went in four ships southwards to Möre, and killed three priests, and burnt three churches, and then they returned. Now, when King Hakon and Earl Sigurd came to Möre with their court, the bonders assembled in great numbers; and immediately, on the first day of the feast, the bonders insisted hard with the king that he should offer sacrifice, and threatened him with violence if he refused. Earl Sigurd tried to make peace between them, and brought it so far that the king took some bits of horse-liver, and emptied all the goblets the bonders filled for him; but as soon as the feast was over, the king and the earl returned to Lade. The king was very ill pleased, and made himself ready to leave Drontheim forthwith with all his people; saying that the next time he came to Drontheim, he would come with such strength of men-at-arms that he would repay the bonders for their enmity towards him. Earl Sigurd entreated the king not to take it amiss of the bonders; adding, that



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it was not wise to threaten them, or to make war upon the people within the country, and especially in the Drontheim district where the strength of the land lay; but the king was so enraged that he would not listen to a word from any body. He went out from Drontheim, and proceeded south to Möre where he remained the rest of the winter, and on to the spring season; and when summer came he assembled men, and the report was that he intended with this army to attack the Drontheim people.

CHAPTER  
XX.  
Battle at  
Augvalds-  
ness.

But just as the king had embarked with a great force of troops, the news was brought him from the south of the country, that King Eric's sons had come from Denmark to Viken, and had driven King Tryggve Olafsson from his ships at Sotanæss, and then had plundered far and wide around in Viken, and that many had submitted to them. Now when King Hakon heard this news, he thought that help was needed; and he sent word to Earl Sigurd, and to the other chiefs from whom he could expect help, to hasten to his assistance. Sigurd the earl came accordingly with a great body of men, among whom were all the Drontheim people who had set upon him the hardest to offer sacrifice; and all made their peace with the king, by the earl's persuasion. Now King Hakon sailed south along the coast; and when he came south as far as Stad, he heard that Eric's sons were come to North Agder. Then they advanced against each other, and met at Kormt. Both parties left their ships there, and gave battle at Augvaldsness. Both parties had a great force, and it was a great battle. King Hakon went forwards bravely, and King Guttorm Ericson met him with his troop, and they exchanged blows with each other. Guttorm fell, and his standard was cut down. Many people fell around him. The army of Eric's sons then took flight to their ships, and rowed away

with the loss of many a man. So says Guttorm SAGA IV.  
Sindre:—

“ The king’s voice waked the silent host  
Who slept beside the wild sea-coast,  
And bade the song of spear and sword  
Over the battle plain be heard.  
Where heroes’ shields the loudest rang,  
Where loudest was the sword-blade’s clang,  
By the sea-shore at Kormt Sound,  
Hakon felled Guttorm to the ground.”

Now King Hakon returned to his ships, and pursued Gunhild’s sons.\* And both parties sailed all they could sail, until they came to Easter Agder†, from whence Eric’s sons set out to sea, and southwards for Jutland. Guttorm Sindre speaks of it in his song:—

“ And Guttorm’s brothers too, who know  
So skilfully to bend the bow,  
The conquering hand must also feel  
Of Hakon, god of the bright steel,—  
The sun-god, whose bright rays, that dart  
Flame-like, are swords that pierce the heart.  
Well I remember how the King  
Hakon, the battle’s life and spring,  
O’er the wide ocean cleared away  
Eric’s brave sons. They durst not stay,  
But round their ships’ sides hung their shields,  
And fled across the blue sea-fields.”

King Hakon returned then northwards to Norway, but Eric’s sons remained a long time in Denmark.

King Hakon after this battle made a law, that all inhabited land over the whole country along the sea-coast, and as far back from it as the salmon swims up in the rivers, should be divided into ship-raths according to the districts; and it was fixed by law how many ships there should be from each district, and how great each should be, when the whole people were called out on service. For this outfit the whole

CHAPTER  
XXI.  
King Ha-  
kon’s laws.

\* Eric’s sons are often called Gunhild’s sons, from their mother.

† Easter Agder appears to have been the district up to Christian-sand; and West or North Agder from thence to about Flikkefiord.



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inhabitants should be bound, whenever a foreign army came to the country. With this came also the order that beacons should be erected upon the hills, so that every man could see from the one to the other; and it is told that a war-signal could thus be given in seven days, from the most southerly beacon to the most northerly Thing-seat in Halogaland.

CHAPTER  
XXII.  
Concerning  
Eric's sons.

Eric's sons plundered much on the Baltic coasts, and sometimes, as before related, in Norway; but so long as Hakon ruled over Norway there was in general good peace, and good seasons, and he was the most beloved of kings. When Hakon had reigned about twenty years in Norway, Eric's sons came from Denmark with a powerful army, of which a great part consisted of the people who had followed them on their expeditions; but a still greater army of Danes had been placed at their disposal by King Harald Gormson. They sailed with a fair wind from Vinde-syssel\*, and came to Agder; and then sailed northwards, night and day, along the coast. But the beacons were not fired, because it had been usual to look for them lighted from the east onwards, and nobody had observed them from the east coast; and besides King Hakon had set heavy penalties for giving false alarm, by lighting the beacons without occasion. The reason of this was, that ships of war and vikings cruised about and plundered among the outlying islands, and the country people took them for Eric's sons, and lighted the beacons, and set the whole country in trouble and dread of war. Sometimes, no doubt, the sons of Eric were there; but having only their own troop, and no Danish army with them, they returned to Denmark; and sometimes these were only small vikings. King Hakon was very angry at this, because it cost both trouble and money to no

\* The end of Jutland, to the north of Lymfiord.

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purpose. The bonders also suffered by these false alarms when they were given uselessly; and thus it happened that no news of this expedition of Eric's sons circulated through the land until they had come as far north as Ulvesound, where they lay for seven days. Then spies set off across the upper neck of land and northwards to Möre. King Hakon was at that time in the island Fræde, in North Möre, at a place called Birkestrand, where he had a dwelling-house, and had no troops with him, only his body-guard or court, and the neighbouring bonders he had invited to his house.

CHAPTER  
XXIII.  
Of Egil  
Ullsærk.

The spies came to King Hakon, and told him that Eric's sons, with a great army, lay just to the south of Stad. Then he called together the most understanding of the men about him, and asked their opinion, whether he should fight with Eric's sons, although they had such a great multitude with them, or should set off northwards to gather together more men. Now there was a bonder there, by name Egil Ullsærk, who was a very old man, but in former days had been strong and stout beyond most men, and a hardy man-at-arms withal, having long carried King Harald's banner. Egil answered thus to the king's speech,—“I was in several battles with thy father Harald the king, and he gave battle sometimes with many, sometimes with few people; but he always came off with victory. Never did I hear him ask counsel of his friends whether he should fly,—and neither shalt thou get any such counsel from us, king; but as we know we have a brave leader, thou shalt get a trusty following from us.” Many others agreed with this speech, and the king himself declared he was most inclined to fight with such strength as they could gather. It was so determined. The king split up a war-arrow, which he sent off in all directions, and by that token a number of men was col-



SAGA IV. — lected in all haste. Then said Egil Ullsærk, — “ At one time the peace had lasted so long I was afraid I might come to die the death of old age\*, within doors upon a bed of straw, although I would rather fall in battle following my chief. And now it may so turn out in the end as I wished it to be.”

CHAPTER  
XXIV.  
Battle at  
Frædar-  
berg.

Eric's sons sailed northwards around Stad, as soon as the wind suited; and when they had passed it, and heard where King Hakon was, they sailed to meet him. King Hakon had nine ships, with which he lay under Frædarberg in Freyarsund; and Eric's sons had twenty ships, with which they brought up on the south side of the same cape, in Freyar Sound. King Hakon sent them a message, asking them to go upon the land; and telling them that he had hedged in with hazel boughs a place of combat at Rastarkalf, where there is a flat large field, at the foot of a long and rather low ridge. Then Eric's sons left their ships, and went northwards over the neck of land within Frædarberg, and onward to Rastarkalf. Then Egil asked King Hakon to give him ten men with ten banners, and the king did so. Then Egil went with his men under the ridge; but King Hakon went out upon the open field with his army, and set up his banner, and drew up his army, saying, “ Let us draw up in a long line, that they may not surround us, as they have the most men.” And so it was done; and there was a severe battle, and a very sharp attack. Then Egil Ullsærk set up the ten banners he had with him, and placed the men who carried them so that they should go as near the summit of the ridge as possible, and leaving a space between each of them. They went so near the summit that the banners could be seen over it, and moved on as if they were coming behind the army of Eric's sons. Now when the men

\* In all the sagas of this pagan time, the dying on a bed of sickness is mentioned as a kind of derogatory end of a man of any celebrity.

who stood uppermost in the line of the troops of Eric's sons saw so many flying banners advancing high over the edge of the ridge, they supposed a great force must be following, who would come behind their army, and between them and their ships. They made each other acquainted with what was going on in a loud shout, and the whole took to flight; and when the kings saw it, they fled with the rest. King Hakon now pushes on briskly with his people, pursuing the flying, and killing many.

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When Gamle Ericsson came up the ridge of the hill he turned round, and he observed that not more people were following than his men had been engaged with already, and he saw it was but a stratagem of war; so he ordered the war-horns to be blown, his banner to be set up, and he put his men in battle order. On this, all his Northmen stood, and turned with him, but the Danes fled to the ships; and when King Hakon and his men came thither, there was again a sharp conflict; but now Hakon had most people. At last the Eric's sons' force fled, and took the road south about the hill; but a part of their army retreated upon the hill southwards, followed by King Hakon. There is a flat field east of the ridge which runs westward along the range of hills, and is bounded on its west side by a steep ridge. Gamle's men retreated towards this ground; but Hakon followed so closely that he killed some, and others ran west over the ridge, and were killed on that side of it. King Hakon did not part with them till the last man of them was killed.

CHAPTER  
XXV.  
Of King  
Gamle, the  
son of Eric.

Gamle Ericsson fled from the ridge down upon the plain to the south of the hill. There he turned himself again, and waited until more people gathered to him. All his brothers, and many troops of their men, assembled there. Egil Ullsærk was in front, and in advance of Hakon's men, and made a stout

CHAITER  
XXVI.  
King  
Gamle and  
Ullsærk  
fall.



SAGA IV. — attack. He and King Gamle exchanged blows with each other, and King Gamle got a grievous wound ; but Egil fell, and many people with him. Then came Hakon the king with the troops which had followed him, and a new battle began. King Hakon pushed on, cutting down men on both sides of him, and killing the one upon the top of the other. So sings Guttorm Sindre : —

“ Scared by the sharp swords’ singing sound,  
Brandished in air, the foe gave ground.  
The boldest warrior cannot stand  
Before King Hakon’s conquering hand ;  
And the king’s banner ever flies  
Where the spear-forests thickest rise.  
Altho’ the king had gained of old  
Enough of Freya’s tears of gold,\*  
He spared himself no more than tho’  
He’d had no well-filled purse to show.”†

When Eric’s sons saw their men falling all round, they turned and fled to their ships ; but those who had sought the ships before had pushed off some of them from the land, while some of them were still hauled up and on the strand. Now the sons of Eric and their men plunged into the sea, and betook themselves to swimming. Gamle Ericsson was drowned ; but the other sons of Eric reached their ships, and set sail with what men remained. They steered southwards to Denmark, where they stopped a while, very ill satisfied with their expedition.

CHAPTER  
XXVII.  
Egil  
Ullsærk’s  
burial-  
ground.

King Hakon took all the ships of the sons of Eric that had been left upon the strand, and had them drawn quite up, and brought on the land. Then he

\* Freya’s husband was Odd ; and her tears, when she wept at the long absence of her husband, were tears of gold. Odd’s wife’s tears is the scald’s expression here for gold—understood, no doubt, as readily as any allusion to Plutus would convey the equivalent meaning in modern poetry.

† Wealth, the acquisition of wealth, appears then to have been the stimulus to enterprise, as much as in our times ; and wealth gained, and liberally used, the great subject of the scalds’ praises.

ordered that Egil Ullsærk, and all the men of his army who had fallen, should be laid in the ships, and covered entirely over with earth and stones. King Hakon made many of the ships to be drawn up to the field of battle, and the hillocks over them are to be seen to the present day a little to the south of Freydarberg. At the time when King Hakon was killed, when Glum Geirason, in his song, boasted of King Hakon's fall, Eyvind Skaldaspiller composed these verses on this battle:—

“ Our dauntless king with Gamle's gore  
Sprinkled his bright sword o'er and o'er;  
Sprinkled the gag that holds the mouth  
Of the fell demon Fenri's wolf.\*  
Proud swelled our warriors' hearts when he  
Drove Eric's sons out to the sea,  
With all their Gotland host: but now  
Our warriors weep—Hakon lies low!”

High standing stones† mark Egil Ullsærk's grave.

When King Hakon, Athelstan's foster-son, had been king for twenty-six years after his brother Eric had left the country, it happened that he was at a feast in the house of Fitjar at Stord, and he had with him at the feast his court and many of the peasants. And just as the king was seated at the supper-table, his watchmen who were outside observed many ships coming sailing along from the south, and not very far from the island. Now, said the one to the other, they should inform the king that they thought an armed force was coming against them; but none thought it

CHAPTER  
XXVIII.  
News of  
war comes  
to King  
Hakon.

\* The Wolf of Fenri, one of the children of Lok begotten with a giantess, was chained to a rock, and gagged by a sword placed in his mouth, to prevent him devouring mankind. Fenri's wolf's-gag is a scaldic expression for a sword.

† The stones set on end in the ground, and 10 or 12 feet high or more, are called standing stones in the Orkney Isles, and other places held by the Scandinavians; and the oblong tumuli found on the coast have very probably been cast over small ships turned bottom up over the bodies of the slain, as described in this chapter, and are called ship mounds, to distinguish them from other mounds, by the Norwegian antiquaries.



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advisable to be the bearer of an alarm of war to the king, as he had set heavy penalties on those who raised such alarms falsely, yet they thought it unsuitable that the king should remain in ignorance of what they saw.\* Then one of them went into the room and asked Eyvind Finsson to come out as fast as possible, for it was very needful. Eyvind immediately came out, and went to where he could see the ships, and saw directly that a great army was on the way; and he returned in all haste into the room, and, placing himself before the king, said, "Short is the hour for acting, and long the hour for feasting." The king cast his eyes upon him, and said, "What now is in the way?" Eyvind said —

“ Up, king ! the avengers are at hand !  
Eric's bold sons approach the land !  
The judgment of the sword they crave  
Against their foe. Thy wrath I brave;  
Tho' well I know 'tis no light thing  
To bring war-tidings to the king,  
And tell him 'tis no time to rest.  
Up ! gird your armour to your breast :  
Thy honour's dearer than my life ;  
Therefore I say, up to the strife ! ”

Then said the king, "Thou art too brave a fellow, Eyvind, to bring us any false alarm of war." The others all said it was a true report. The king ordered the tables to be removed, and then he went out to look at the ships; and when it could be clearly seen that these were ships of war, the king asked his men what resolution they should take — whether to give battle with the men they had, or go on board ship and sail away northwards along the land. "For it is

\* A curious instance of the discipline and deference for the king of these Northmen, and which accounts for their success against the people they invaded, and is also singularly in contrast with what follows — the reference by the king to his men for approving his plan of giving battle, and not retreating. This strict discipline and freedom united accounts for the success of their predatory expeditions.

easy to see," said he, "that we must now fight against a much greater force than we ever had against us before; although we thought just the same the last time we fought against Gunhild's sons." No onewas in a hurry to give an answer to the king; but at last Eyvind replied to the king's speech:—

"Thou who in the battle-plain  
Hast often poured the sharp spear-rain!  
Ill it beseems our warriors brave  
To fly upon the ocean wave:  
To fly upon the blue wave north,  
When Harald from the south comes forth,  
With many a ship riding in pride  
Upon the foaming ocean-tide;  
With many a ship and southern viking,—  
Let us take shield in hand, brave king!"

The king replied, "Thy counsel, Eyvind, is manly, and after my own heart; but I will hear the opinion of others upon this matter." Now as the king's men thought they discerned what way the king was inclined to take, they answered that they would rather fall bravely and like men, than fly before the Danes; adding, that they had often gained the victory against greater odds of numbers. The king thanked them for their resolution, and bade them arm themselves; and all the men did so. The king put on his armour, and girded on his sword Quernbiter, and put a gilt helmet upon his head, and took a spear in his hand, and a shield by his side. He then drew up his court-men and the bonders in one body, and set up his banner.

After Gamle's death King Harald, Eric's son, was the chief of the brothers, and he had a great army with him from Denmark. In their army were also their mother's brothers, — Eyvind Skreya, and Alf Askmand, both strong and able men, and great man-slayers. The sons of Eric brought up with their ships off the island, and it is said that their force was

CHAPTER  
XXIX.  
The arma-  
ment of  
Eric's sons.



SAGA IV. not less than six to one, — so much stronger in men  
 — were Eric's sons.

CHAPTER  
 XXX.  
 King Ha-  
 kon's battle  
 array.

When King Hakon had drawn up his men, it is told of him that he threw off his armour before the battle began. So sings Eyvind Skaldaspiller: —

“ They found Biorne's brother \* bold  
 Under his banner as of old,  
 Ready for battle. Foes advance, —  
 The front rank raise the shining lance;  
 And now begins the bloody fray!  
 Now! now begins Hildur's wild play! †  
 Our noble king, whose name strikes fear  
 Into each Danish heart, — whose spear  
 Has single-handed spilt the blood  
 Of many a Danish noble, — stood  
 Beneath his helmet's eagle wing ‡  
 Amidst his guards; but the brave king  
 Scorned to wear armour, while his men  
 Bared naked breasts against the rain  
 Of spear and arrow. Off he flung  
 His coat of mail, his breast-plate rung  
 Against the stones; and, blithe and gay,  
 He rushed into the thickest fray.  
 With golden helm, and naked breast,  
 Brave Hakon played at slaughter's feast.”

King Hakon selected willingly such men for his guard or court-men as were distinguished for their strength and bravery, as his father King Harald also used to do; and among these was Thoralf Skolinson the Strong, who went on one side of the king. He had helmet and shield, spear and sword; and his sword was called by the name of Footbreadth. It was said that Thoralf and King Hakon were equal in strength. Thord Siarekson speaks of it in the poem he composed concerning Thoralf: —

“ The king's men went with merry words  
 To the sharp clash of shields and swords,  
 When these wild rovers of the sea  
 At Fitlar fought. Stout Thoralf he

---

\* King Hakon.

† Hildur's play was battle.

‡ The helm was adorned with eagle's feathers, or with the figure of an eagle.

Next to the Northmen's hero came,  
 Scattering wide round the battle flame  
 For in the storm of shields not one  
 Ventured like him with brave Hakon."

When both lines met there was a hard combat, and much bloodshed. The combatants threw their spears, and then drew their swords. Then King Hakon, and Thoralf with him, went in advance of the banner, cutting down on both sides of them. So says Eyvind Skaldaspiller: —

"The body-coats of linked steel,  
 The woven iron coats of mail,  
 Like water fly before the swing  
 Of Hakon's sword — the champion-king.  
 About each Gotland war-man's head  
 Helm splits, like ice beneath the tread,  
 Cloven by the axe or sharp sword-blade.  
 The brave king, foremost in the fight,  
 Dyes crimson-red the spotless white  
 Of his bright shield with foemen's gore, —  
 Amidst the battle wild uproar,  
 Wild pealing round from shore to shore."

King Hakon was very conspicuous among other men, and also when the sun shone his helmet glanced, and thereby many weapons were directed at him. Then Eyvind Finnson took a hat and put it over the king's helmet. Now Eyvind Skreya called out, "Does the king of the Norsemen hide himself, or has he fled? Where is now the golden helmet?" Then Eyvind, and his brother Alf with him, pushed on like fools or madmen. The king said, "Come on as ye are coming, and ye will find the king of the Norsemen." So says Eyvind Skaldaspiller: —

CHAPTER  
 XXXI.  
 The fall of  
 Eyvind  
 Skreya  
 and of Alf  
 Askmand.

"The raiser of the storm of shields,  
 The conqueror in battle fields, —  
 Hakon the brave, the warrior's friend,  
 Who scatters gold with liberal hand,  
 Heard Skreya's taunt, and saw him rush  
 Amidst the sharp spears' thickest push,  
 And loudly shouted in reply —  
 'If thou wilt for the victory try,  
 The Norseman's king thou soon shalt find!  
 Hold onwards, friend! Hast thou a mind?'"



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It was also but a short space of time before Eyvind did come up swinging his sword, and made a cut at the king ; but Thoralf thrust his shield so hard against Eyvind that he tottered with the shock. Now the king takes his sword Quernbiter with both hands, and hewed Eyvind through helm and head, and clove him down to the shoulders. Thoralf also slew Alf Askmand. So says Eyvind Skaldaspiller : —

“ With both his hands the gallant king  
Swung round his sword, and to the chin  
Clove Eyvind down : his faithless mail  
Against it could no more avail,  
Than the thin plank against the shock  
When the ship’s side beats on the rock.  
By his bright sword with golden haft  
Thro’ helm, and head, and hair, was cleft  
The Danish champion ; and amain,  
With terror smitten, fled his men.”

After this fall of the two brothers, King Hakon pressed on so hard that all men gave way before his assault. Now fear came over the army of Eric’s sons, and the men began to fly ; and King Hakon, who was at the head of his men, pressed on the flying, and hewed down oft and hard. Then flew an arrow, one of the kind called flein, into Hakon’s arm, into the muscles below the shoulder ; and it is said by many people that Gunhild’s shoe-boy, whose name was Kisping, ran out and forwards amidst the confusion of arms, and called out “ Make room for the king-killer.” Others again say that nobody could tell who shot the king, which is indeed the most likely ; for spears, arrows, and all kinds of missiles flew as thick as a snow-drift. Many of the people of Eric’s sons were killed, both on the field of battle and on the way to the ships, and also on the strand, and many threw themselves into the water. Many also, among whom were Eric’s sons, got on board their ships, and rowed away as fast as they could, and Hakon’s men after them. So says Thord Siarekson : —

SAGA IV.  

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“ The wolf, the murderer, and the thief,  
 Fled from before the people’s chief :  
 Few breakers of the peace grew old  
 Under the Northmen’s king so bold.  
 When gallant Hakon lost his life  
 Black was the day, and dire the strife.  
 It was bad work for Gunhild’s sons,  
 Leading their pack of hungry Danes  
 From out the south, to have to fly,  
 And many a bonder leave to die,  
 Leaning his heavy wounded head  
 On the oar-bench for feather-bed,  
 Thoralf was nearest to the side  
 Of gallant Hakon in the tide  
 Of battle ; his the sword that best  
 Carved out the raven’s bloody feast:  
 Amidst the heaps of foemen slain,  
 He was named bravest on the plain.”

When King Hakon came out to his ship he had his wound bound up ; but the blood ran from it so much and so constantly, that it could not be stopped ; and when the day was drawing to an end his strength began to leave him. Then he told his men that he wanted to go northwards to his house at Alrekstad\* ; but when he came north, as far as Hakon’s Hill†, they put in towards the land, for by this time the king was almost lifeless. Then he called his friends around him, and told them what he wished to be done with regard to his kingdom. He had only one child, a daughter, called Thora, and had no son. Now he told them to send a message to Eric’s sons, that they should be kings over the country ; but asked them to hold his friends in respect and honour. “ And if fate,” added he, “ should prolong my life, I will, at any rate, leave the country, and go to a Christian land, and do penance for what I have done against God ; but should I die in heathen land, give me any burial you think fit.” Shortly after-

CHAPTER  
 XXXII.  
 Hakon’s  
 death.

\* Alrekstad is now called Aarstad, in the neighbourhood of Bergen.

† Hakon’s Hill is now called Hoakhella, — the hill or hella on the mainland south of Alviste, in Askö parish.



## SAGA IV.

wards Hakon expired, at the little hill on the shore-side at which he was born. So great was the sorrow over Hakon's death, that he was lamented both by friends and enemies; and they said that never again would Norway see such a king. His friends removed his body to Seaheim\*, in North Hordaland, and made a great mound, in which they laid the king in full armour and in his best clothes, but with no other goods. They spoke over his grave, as heathen people are used to do, and wished him in Valhalla. Eyvind Skaldaspiller composed a poem on the death of King Hakon, and on how well he was received in Valhalla. The poem is called "Hakonarmal:" —

" In Odin's hall an empty place  
Stands for a king of Yngve's race;  
' Go, my valkyriars,' Odin said,  
' Go forth, my angels of the dead,  
Gondul and Skögun, to the plain  
Drenched with the battle's bloody rain,  
And to the dying Hakon tell,  
Here in Valhalla he shall dwell.'

" At Stord, so late a lonely shore,  
Was heard the battle's wild uproar;  
The lightning of the flashing sword  
Burned fiercely at the shore of Stord.  
From levelled halberd and spear-head  
Life-blood was dropping fast and red;  
And the keen arrows' biting sleet  
Upon the shore at Stord fast beat.

" Upon the thundering cloud of shield  
Flashed bright the sword-storm o'er the field;  
And on the plate-mail rattled loud  
The arrow-shower's rushing cloud,  
In Odin's tempest-weather, there  
Swift whistling through the angry air;  
And the spear-torrent swept away  
Ranks of brave men from light of day.

" With batter'd shield, and blood-smear'd sword,  
Sits one beside the shore at Stord,

---

\* At Sæheimr, now Sem, in a parish north of Bergen, the mound is still remaining, and called Hakon's. This battle at Stord and Hakon's death took place in 963, according to Schöning.

With armour crushed and gashed sits he,  
A grim and ghastly sight to see;  
And round about in sorrow stand  
The warriors of his gallant band:  
Because the king of Döglin's race  
In Odin's hall must fill a place.

- “ Then up spake Gondul, standing near,  
Resting upon his long ash spear, —  
‘ Hakon ! the gods' cause prospers well,  
And thou in Odin's halls shalt dwell ! ’  
The king beside the shore of Stord  
The speech of the valkyriar heard,  
Who sat there on his coal-black steed,  
With shield on arm and helm on head.
- “ Thoughtful, said Hakon, ‘ Tell me why,  
Ruler of battles, victory  
Is so dealt out on Stord's red plain ?  
Have we not well deserved to gain ? ’  
‘ And is it not as well dealt out ? ’  
Said Gondul. ‘ Hearest thou not the shout ?  
The field is cleared — the foemen run —  
The day is ours — the battle won ! ’
- “ Then Skogul said, ‘ My coal-black steed,  
Home to the gods I now must speed,  
To their green home, to tell the tiding  
That Hakon's self is thither riding.’  
To Hermod and to Braga then  
Said Odin, ‘ Here, the first of men,  
Brave Hakon comes, the Norsemen's king, —  
Go forth, my welcome to him bring.’
- “ Fresh from the battle-field came in,  
Dripping with blood, the Norsemen's king.  
‘ Methinks,’ said he, ‘ great Odin's will  
Is harsh, and bodes me further ill :  
Thy son from off the field to-day  
From victory to snatch away ! ’  
But Odin said, ‘ Be thine the joy  
Valhalla gives, my own brave boy ! ’
- “ And Braga said, ‘ Eight brothers here  
Welcome thee to Valhalla's cheer,  
To drain the cup, or fights repeat  
Where Hakon Eric's earls beat.’  
Quoth the stout king, ‘ And shall my gear,  
Helm, sword, and mail-coat, axe and spear,  
Be still at hand ? ’Tis good to hold  
Fast by our trusty friends of old.’



SAGA IV.  

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“ Well was it seen that Hakon still  
 Had saved the temples from all ill ;\*  
 For the whole council of the gods  
 Welcomed the king to their abodes.  
 Happy the day when men are born  
 Like Hakon, who all base things scorn, —  
 Win from the brave an honoured name,  
 And die amidst an endless fame.

“ Sooner shall Fenri’s wolf† devour  
 The race of man from shore to shore,  
 Than such a grace to kingly crown  
 As gallant Hakon want renown.  
 Life, land, friends, riches, all will fly,  
 And we in slavery shall sigh. ‡  
 But Hakon in the blessed abodes  
 For ever lives with the bright gods.”

---

\* Hakon, although a Christian, appears to have favoured the old religion, and spared the temples of Odin ; and therefore a place in Valhalla is assigned him.

† The wolf of Fenri is kept in chains and gagged with a sword until the end of the world, when he is to devour mankind.

‡ This is supposed to allude to the successor of Hakon, one of Eric’s sons, whose government was tyrannical and disliked.

## V.

## SAGA V.

SAGA OF KING HARALD GREYSKIN, AND OF EARL  
HAKON SON OF SIGURD.\*

WHEN King Hakon was killed, the sons of Eric took the sovereignty of Norway. Harald, who was the oldest of the living brothers, was over them in dignity. Their mother Gunhild, who was called the King-mother, mixed herself much in the affairs of the country. There were many chiefs in the land at that time. There was Tryggve Olafsson in the Eastland, Gudrod Biornson in the Westfold, Sigurd earl of Lade in the Drontheim land; but Gunhild's sons held the middle of the country the first winter. There went messages and ambassadors between Gunhild's sons and Tryggve and Gudrod, and all was settled upon the footing that they should hold from Gunhild's sons the same part of the country which they formerly had held under King Hakon. A man called Glum Geirason, who was King Harald's scald, and was a very brave man, made this song upon King Hakon's death:—

“ Gamle is avenged by Harald !  
Great is thy deed, thou champion bold !  
The rumour of it came to me  
In distant lands beyond the sea,  
How Harald gave King Hakon's blood  
To Odin's ravens for their food.”

This song was much favoured. When Eyvind Finnson heard of it he composed the song which was given before†, viz.:—

“ Our dauntless king with Gamle's gore  
Sprinkled his bright sword o'er and o'er,” &c.

This song also was much favoured, and was spread

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\* Harald Graafeld or Greyskin reigned from about the year 963 to about the year 977; and Earl Hakon from about 978 to 996.

† Chapter 27. of the Saga of Hakon Athelstan's foster-son.

CHAPTER  
I.  
Beginning  
of the go-  
vernment  
of the sons  
of Eric :  
and about  
Eyvind  
Skalda-  
spiller.



## SAGA V.

widely abroad; and when King Harald came to hear of it, he laid a charge against Eyvind affecting his life; but friends made up the quarrel, on the condition that Eyvind should in future be Harald's scald, as he had formerly been King Hakon's. There was also some relationship between them, as Gunhild, Eyvind's mother, was a daughter of Earl Halfdan, and her mother was a daughter of Harald Haarfager. Thereafter Eyvind made a song about King Harald:—

“ Guardian of Norway, well we know  
Thy heart failed not when from the bow  
The piercing arrow-hail sharp rang  
On shield and breast-plate, and the clang  
Of sword resounded in the press  
Of battle, like the splitting ice;  
For Harald, wild wolf of the wood,  
Must drink his fill of foemen's blood.”

Gunhild's sons resided mostly in the middle of the country, for they did not think it safe for them to dwell among the people of Drontheim or of Viken, where King Hakon's best friends lived; and also in both places there were many powerful men. Proposals of agreement then passed between Gunhild's sons and Earl Sigurd, for they got no scatt from the Drontheim country; and at last an agreement was concluded between the kings and the earl, and confirmed by oath. Earl Sigurd was to get the same power in the Drontheim land which he had possessed under King Hakon, and on that they considered themselves at peace. All Gunhild's sons had the character of being penurious; and it was said they hid their money in the ground. Eyvind Skaldaspiller made a song about this:—

“ Main-mast of battle! Harald bold!  
In Hakon's days the scald wore gold  
Upon his falcon's seat\*; he wore  
Rolf Krake's seed†, the yellow ore,

---

\* One of the Edda figures of speech for the hand.

† Rolf Krake scattered gold on his flight over the Fyrisvolde, to divert the pursuit of Adils' men. The meaning is, the scalds had gold rings on their fingers in Hakon's days.

Sown by him as he fled away,  
 The avenger Adils' speed to stay.  
 The gold crop grows upon the plain ;  
 But Frode's girls so gay\* in vain  
 Grind out the golden meal, while those  
 Who rule o'er Norway's realm like foes,  
 In mother earth's old bosom hide  
 The wealth which Hakon far and wide  
 Scattered with generous hand : the sun  
 Shone in the days of that great one,  
 On the gold band of Fulla's brow †,  
 On gold-ringed hands that bend the bow,  
 On the scald's hand ; but of the ray  
 Of bright gold, glancing like the spray  
 Of sun-lit waves, no scald now sings —  
 Buried are golden chains and rings."

Now when King Harald heard this song, he sent a message to Eyvind to come to him, and when Eyvind came made a charge against him of being unfaithful. "And it ill becomes thee," said the king, "to be my enemy, as thou hast entered into my service." Eyvind then made these verses :—

"One lord I had before thee, Harald !  
 One dear-loved lord ! Now am I old,  
 And do not wish to change again. —  
 To that loved lord, through strife and pain,  
 Faithful I stood ; still true to Hakon, —  
 To my good king, and him alone.  
 But now I'm old and useless grown,  
 My hands are empty, wealth is flown ;  
 I am but fit for a short space  
 In thy court-hall to fill a place."

But King Harald forced Eyvind to submit himself to his clemency. Eyvind had a great gold ring, which was called Molde, that had been dug up out of the earth long since. This ring the king said he must have as the mulct for the offence ; and there was no help for it. Then Eyvind sang :—

\* Menia and Fenia were strong girls of the giant race, whom Frode bought in Sweden to grind gold and good luck to him ; and their meal means gold.

† Fulla was one of Odin's followers, who wore a gold band on the forehead ; and the figure means gold,—that the sun shone on gold rings on the hands of the scalds in Hakon's days.



SAGA V.  

---

“ I go across the ocean-foam,  
 Swift skating to my Iceland home  
 Upon the ocean-skates\*, fast driven  
 By gales by Thurse’s witch-wife given.  
 For from the falcon-bearing hand  
 Harald has plucked the gold snake-band  
 My father wore — by lawless might  
 Has taken what is mine by right.”

Eyvind went home; but it is not told that he ever came near the king again.

CHAPTER  
 II.  
 Of the  
 Chris-  
 tianity of  
 Gunhild’s  
 sons.

Gunhild’s sons embraced Christianity in England, as told before; but when they came to rule over Norway they made no progress in spreading Christianity, — only they pulled down the temples of the idols, and cast away the sacrifices where they had it in their power, and raised great animosity by doing so. The good crops of the country were soon wasted in their days, because there were many kings, and each had his court about him. They had therefore great expenses, and were very greedy. Besides, they only observed those laws of King Hakon which suited themselves. They were, however, all of them remarkably handsome men — stout, strong, and expert in all exercises. So says Glum Geirason, in the verses he composed about Harald, Gunhild’s son : —

“ The foeman’s terror, Harald bold,  
 Had gained enough of yellow gold;  
 Had Heimdal’s teeth† enough in store,  
 And understood twelve arts or more.”

The brothers sometimes went out on expeditions together, and sometimes each on his own account. They were fierce, but brave and active; and great warriors, and very successful.

\* Ocean’s skates, — an expression for ships.

† Heimdal was one of the gods, whose horse was called Gold Head; and the horse’s teeth were of gold. Heimdal’s teeth is a figurative expression of the scald for gold. In the translation these figurative expressions are retained when they can be explained briefly, as they show the nature of the poetic language of the original.

Gunhild the King-mother, and her sons, often met, and talked together upon the government of the country. Once Gunhild asked her sons what they intended to do with their kingdom of Drontheim. "Ye have the title of king, as your forefathers had before you; but you have little land or people, and there are many to divide with. In the East, at Viken, there are Tryggve and Gudrod; and they have no right, from relationship, to their governments. There is besides Earl Sigurd ruling over the whole Drontheim country; and no reason can I see why ye let so large a kingdom be ruled by an earl, and not by yourselves. It appears wonderful to me that ye go every summer upon viking cruises against other lands, and allow an earl within the country to take your father's heritage from you. Your grandfather, whose name you bear, King Harald, thought it but a small matter to take an earl's life and land when he subdued all Norway, and held it under him to old age."

Harald replied, "It is not so easy, mother, to cut off Earl Sigurd as to slay a kid or a calf. Earl Sigurd is of high birth, powerful in relations, popular, and prudent; and I think if the Drontheim people knew for certain there was enmity between us, they would all take his side, and we could expect only evil from them. I don't think it would be safe for any of us brothers to fall into the hands of the Drontheim people."

Then said Gunhild, "We shall go to work another way, and not put ourselves forward. Harald and Erling shall come in harvest to Nordmör, and there I shall meet you, and we shall consult together what is to be done."

Earl Sigurd had a brother called Griotgaard, who was much younger, and much less respected; in fact, was held in no esteem. He had many people, how-

SAGA V.

CHAPTER

III.

Of the  
councils  
held by  
Gunhild  
and her  
sons.

CHAPTER

IV.

The plans  
of Gun-



SAGA V.  
hild's sons  
and Griot-  
gaard.

ever, about him, and in summer went on viking cruises, and gathered to himself property. Now King Harald sent messengers to Drontheim with offers of friendship, and with presents. The messengers declared that King Harald was willing to be on the same friendly terms with the earl that King Hakon had been: adding, that they wished the earl to come to King Harald, that their friendship might be put on a firm footing. The Earl Sigurd received well the king's messengers and friendly message, but said that on account of his many affairs he could not come to the king. He sent many friendly gifts, and many glad and grateful words to the king, in return for his friendship. With this reply the messengers set off, and went to Griotgaard, for whom they had the same message, and brought him good presents, and offered him King Harald's friendship, and invited him to visit the king. Griotgaard promised to come; and at the appointed time he paid a visit to King Harald and Gunhild, and was received in the most friendly manner. They treated him on the most intimate footing, so that Griotgaard had access to their private consultations and secret councils. At last the conversation, by an understanding between the king and queen, was turned upon Earl Sigurd; and they spoke to Griotgaard about the earl having kept him so long in obscurity, and asked him if he would not join the king's brothers in an attack on the earl. If he would join with them, the king promised Griotgaard that he should be his earl, and have the same government that Sigurd had. It came so far that a secret agreement was made between them, that Griotgaard should spy out the most favourable opportunity of attacking by surprise Earl Sigurd, and should give King Harald notice of it. After this agreement Griotgaard returned home with many good presents from the king.

Earl Sigurd went in harvest into Stordal to guest-quarters, and from thence went to Oglo to a feast. The earl usually had many people about him, for he did not trust the king; but now, after friendly messages had passed between the king and him, he had no great following of people with him. Then Griotgaard sent word to the king that he could never expect a better opportunity to fall upon Earl Sigurd; and immediately, that very evening, Harald and Erling sailed into Drontheim fiord with several ships and many people. They sailed all night by star-light, and Griotgaard came out to meet them. Late in the night they came to Oglo\*, where Earl Sigurd was at the feast, and set fire to the house; and burnt the house, the earl, and all his men. As soon as it was daylight they set out through the fiord, and south to Möre, where they remained a long time.

Hakon, the son of Earl Sigurd, was up in the interior of the Drontheim country when he heard this news. Great was the tumult through all the Drontheim land, and every vessel that could swim was put into the water; and as soon as the people were gathered together they took Earl Sigurd's son Hakon to be their earl and the leader of the troops, and the whole body steered out of Drontheim fiord. When Gunhild's sons heard of this, they set off southwards to Raumsdal and South Möre; and both parties kept eye on each other by their spies. Earl Sigurd was killed two years after the fall of King Hakon. So says Eyvind Skaldaspiller in the "Haleygia-tal:"—

“ At Oglo, as I've heard, Earl Sigurd  
Was burnt to death by Norway's lord, —  
Sigurd, who once on Hadding's grave  
A feast to Odin's ravens gave.

SAGA V.

CHAPTER

V.

Earl Sigurd burnt  
in a house  
in Stordal.

CHAPTER  
VI.

Beginning  
of the  
history of  
Earl Hakon, Sigurd's son.

\* The site of Oglo is not well ascertained by the Norwegian antiquaries. It is supposed to be in Skatvold, near Stordal.



## SAGA V.

In Oglo's hall, amidst the feast,  
When bowls went round and ale flow'd fast,  
He perished : Harald lit the fire  
Which burnt to death the son of Tyr."

Earl Hakon, with the help of his friends, maintained himself in the Drontheim country for three years; and during that time Gunhild's sons got no revenues from it. Hakon had many a battle with Gunhild's sons, and many a man lost his life on both sides. Of this Einar Skalaglam speaks in his lay, called "Velleklo," which he composed about Earl Hakon:—

"The sharp bow-shooter on the sea  
Spread wide his fleet, for well loved he  
The battle storm; well loved the earl  
His battle-banner to unfurl.  
O'er the well-trampled battle-field  
He raised the red moon of his shield;  
And often dared King Eric's son  
To try the fray with the Earl Hakon."

And he also says:—

"Who is the man who'll dare to say  
That Sigurd's son avoids the fray?  
He gluts the raven—he ne'er fears  
The arrow's song or flight of spears.  
With thundering sword he storms in war,  
As Odin dreadful; or from far  
He makes the arrow-shower fly  
To swell the sail of victory.  
The victory was dearly bought,  
And many a viking-fight was fought  
Before the swinger of the sword  
Was of the eastern country lord."

And Einar tells also how Earl Hakon avenged his father's murder:—

"I praise the man, my hero he,  
Who in his good ship roves the sea,  
Like bird of prey, intent to win  
Red vengeance for his slaughtered kin.  
From his blue sword the iron rain  
That freezes life poured down amain  
On him who took his father's life,  
On him and his men in the strife.

To Odin many a soul was driven, —  
 To Odin many a rich gift given.  
 Loud raged the storm on battle-field —  
 Axe rang on helm, and sword on shield."

SAGA V.  

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The friends on both sides at last laid themselves between, and brought proposals of peace; for the bonders suffered by this strife and war in the land. At last it was brought to this, by the advice of prudent men, that Earl Hakon should have the same power in the Drontheim land which his father Earl Sigurd had enjoyed; and the kings, on the other hand, should have the same dominion as King Hakon had: and this agreement was settled with the fullest promises of fidelity to it. Afterwards a great friendship arose between Earl Hakon and Gunhild, although they sometimes attempted to deceive each other. And thus matters stood for three years longer, in which time Earl Hakon sat quietly in his dominions.

King Harald had generally his seat in Hordaland and Rogaland, and also his brothers; but very often, also, they went to Hardanger. One summer it happened that a vessel came from Iceland belonging to Icelanders, and loaded with skins and peltry. They sailed to Hardanger, where they heard the greatest number of people were assembled; but when the folks came to deal with them, nobody would buy their skins. Then the steersman went to King Harald, whom he had been acquainted with before, and complained of his ill luck. The king promised to visit him, and did so. King Harald was very condescending, and full of fun. He came with a fully manned boat, looked at the skins, and then said to the steersman, "Wilt thou give me a present of one of these wolf-skins?"\* "Willingly," said the steersman, "if it were ever so many." On this the king wrapped him-

CHAPTER  
 VII.  
 Of Harald  
 Greyskin.

\* It is not clear that the "grey skins" of this story were wolves' skins. It is likely they were fox or seal skins. The wolf is not found in Iceland.



## SAGA V.

self up in a wolf-skin, and went back to his boat ; but before they rowed away from the ship, every man in his suite bought such another wolf-skin as the king wore for himself. In a few days so many people came to buy skins, that not half of them could be served with what they wanted ; and thereafter the king was called Harald Greyskin.

CHAPTER  
VIII.  
Earl Eric's  
birth.

Earl Hakon came one winter to the Uplands to a feast, and it so happened that he had intercourse with a girl of mean birth. Some time after the girl had to prepare for her confinement ; and she bore a child, a boy, who had water poured on him, and was named Eric. The mother carried the boy to Earl Hakon, and said that he was the father. The earl placed him to be brought up with a man called Thorleif the Wise, who dwelt in Midaldal, and was a rich and powerful man, and a great friend of the earl. Eric gave hopes very early that he would become an able man, was handsome in countenance, and stout and strong for a child ; but the earl did not pay much attention to him. The earl himself was one of the handsomest men in countenance, — not tall, but very strong, and well practised in all kinds of exercises ; and withal prudent, of good understanding, and a deadly man at arms.

CHAPTER  
IX.  
King  
Tryggve  
Olafsson's  
murder.

It happened one harvest that Earl Hakon, on a journey in the Uplands, came to Hedemark ; and King Tryggve Olafsson and King Gudrod Biorneson met him there, and Dale-Gudbrand also came to the meeting. They had agreed to meet, and they talked together long by themselves ; but so much only was known of their business, that they were to be friends of each other. They parted, and each went home to his own kingdom. Gunhild and her sons came to hear of this meeting, and they suspected it must have been to lay a treasonable plot against the kings ; and they often talked of this among themselves. When

SAGA V.  

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spring began to set in, King Harald and his brother King Gudrod proclaimed that they were to make a viking cruise, as usual, either in the West sea, or the Baltic. The people accordingly assembled, launched the ships into the sea, and made themselves ready to sail. When they were drinking the farewell ale,—and they drank bravely,—much and many things were talked over at the drink-table, and, among other things, were comparisons between different men, and at last between the kings themselves. One said that King Harald excelled his brothers by far, and in every way. On this King Gudrod was very angry, and said that he was in no respect behind Harald, and was ready to prove it. Instantly both parties were so inflamed that they challenged each other to battle, and ran to their arms. But some of the guests who were less drunk, and had more understanding, came between them, and quieted them; and each went to his ship, but nobody expected that they would all sail together. Gudrod sailed eastward along the land, and Harald went out to sea, saying he would go to the westward; but when he came outside of the islands he steered east along the coast, outside of the rocks and isles. Gudrod, again, sailed inside, through the usual channel, to Viken, and eastwards to Folden. He then sent a message to King Tryggve to meet him, that they might make a cruise together in summer in the Baltic to plunder. Tryggve accepted willingly, and as a friend, the invitation; and as he heard King Gudrod had but few people with him, he came to meet him with a single boat. They met at Vegger, to the east of Sotaness; but just as they were come to the meeting place, Gudrod's men ran up and killed King Tryggve and twelve men. He lies buried at a place called Tryggve's Cairn.

King Harald sailed far outside of the rocks and isles; but set his course to Viken, and came in the

CHAPTER  
X.  
King Gud-  
rod's fall.



## SAGA V.

night time to Tunsberg, and heard that Gudrod Biorneson was at a feast a little way up the country. Then King Harald set out immediately with his followers, came in the night, and surrounded the house. King Gudrod Biorneson went out with his people; but after a short resistance he fell, and many men with him. Then King Harald joined his brother King Gudrod, and they subdued all Viken.

CHAPTER  
XI.  
Of Harald  
Grænske.

King Gudrod Biorneson had made a good and suitable marriage, and had by his wife a son called Harald, who had been sent to be fostered to Grænland to a lenderman called Hroe the White. Hroe's son, called Hrane the Far-travelled, was Harald's foster-brother, and about the same age. After his father Gudrod's fall, Harald, who was called Grænske, fled to the Uplands, and with him his foster-brother Hrane, and a few people. Harald staid a while there among his relations; but as Eric's sons sought after every man who interfered with them, and especially those who might oppose them, Harald Grænske's friends and relations advised him to leave the country. Harald therefore went westward into Sweden, and sought shipmates, that he might enter into company with those who went out a cruising to gather property. Harald became in this way a remarkably able man. There was a man in Sweden at that time called Toste, one of the most powerful and clever in the land among those who had no high name or dignity; and he was a great warrior, who had been often in battle, and was therefore called Skoglar\* Toste. Harald Grænske came into his company, and cruised with Toste in summer; and wherever Harald came he was well thought of by every one. In the winter Harald, after passing two years in the Uplands, took

\* From the valkyriar or companion of Odin called Skögul. Therefore Skogle Toste was the warlike Toste.

up his abode with Toste, and lived five years with him. Toste had a daughter, who was both young and handsome, but she was proud and high-minded. She was called Sigrid, and was afterwards married to the Swedish king, Eric the Successful, and had a son by him, called Olaf the Swede, who was afterwards king of Sweden. King Eric died in a sick-bed at Upsal, ten years after the death of Styrbiorn.

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Gunhild's sons levied a great army in Viken, and sailed along the land northwards, collecting people and ships on the way out of every district. They then made known their intent, to proceed northwards with their army against Earl Hakon in Drontheim. When Earl Hakon heard this news, he also collected men, and fitted out ships; and when he heard what an overwhelming force Gunhild's sons had with them, he steered south with his fleet to Möre, pillaging wherever he came, and killing many people, both rich and poor. He then sent the whole of the bonder army back to Drontheim; but he himself, with his men-at-arms, proceeded by both the districts of Möre and Raumsdal, and had his spies out to the south of Stad to spy the army of Gunhild's sons; and when he heard they were come into the Fiords, and were waiting for a fair wind to sail northwards round Stad, Earl Hakon set out to sea from the north side of Stad, so far that his sails could not be seen from the land, and then sailed eastward on a line with the coast, and came to Denmark, from whence he sailed into the Baltic, and pillaged there during the summer. Gunhild's sons conducted their army north to Drontheim, and remained there the whole summer collecting the scatt and duties. But when summer was advanced they left Sigurd Sleve and Gudrod behind; and the other brothers returned eastward with the levied army they had taken up in summer.

CHAPTER  
XII.  
Earl Hakon's feuds.



SAGA V.  
 CHAPTER  
 XIII.  
 Of Earl  
 Hakon and  
 Gunhild's  
 sons.

Earl Hakon, towards harvest, sailed into the Bothnian Gulph to Helsingialand, drew his ships up there on the beach, and took the land-ways through Helsingialand and Jemteland, and so eastwards round the dividing ridge (the Kiol, or keel of the country), and down into the Drontheim district. Many people streamed towards him, and he fitted out ships. When the sons of Gunhild heard of this, they got on board their ships, and sailed out of the Fiord; and Earl Hakon came to his seat at Lade, and remained there all winter. The sons of Gunhild, on the other hand, occupied Möre; and they and the earl attacked each other in turns, killing each other's people. Earl Hakon kept his dominions of Drontheim, and was there generally in the winter; but in summer he sometimes went to Helsingialand, where he went on board of his ships and sailed with them down into the Baltic, and plundered there; and sometimes he remained in Drontheim, and kept an army on foot, so that Gunhild's sons could get no hold northwards of Stad.

CHAPTER  
 XIV.  
 Sigurd  
 Svee's  
 murder.

One summer Harald Greyskin with his troops went north to Biarmeland\*, where he forayed, and fought a great battle with the inhabitants on the banks of the Dwina. King Harald gained the victory, killed many people, plundered and wasted and burned far and wide in the land, and made enormous booty. Glum Geirason tells of it thus: —

“ I saw the hero Harald chase  
 With bloody sword Biarme's race :  
 They fly before him through the night,  
 All by their burning city's light.  
 On Dwina's bank, at Harald's word,  
 Arose the storm of spear and sword.  
 In such a wild war-cruise as this,  
 Great would he be who could bring peace.”

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\* The coast of the White Sea. This name is supposed to be still retained in the name Permia given to this province.

King Sigurd Sleeve came to Hersen\* Klyp's house. Klyp was a son of Thord, and a grandson of Horda Kaare, and was a man of power and great family. He was not at home; but his wife Alof gave a good reception to the king, and made a great feast at which there was much drinking. Alof was a daughter of Asbiorn, and sister to Jernskiægge†, north in Yriar. Asbiorn's brother was called Reidar, who was father to Styrkar, whose son was Endrid, father of Einar Tambaskielver. In the night the king went to bed to Alof against her will, and then set out on his journey. The harvest thereafter, King Harald and his brother King Sigurd Sleeve went to Fors, and summoned the bonders to a Thing. There the bonders fell on them, and would have killed them, but they escaped and took different roads. King Harald went to Hardanger, but King Sigurd to Alrekstad. Now when the Herse Klyp heard of this, he and his relations assembled to attack the king; and Vemund Volubriot was chief of their troop. Now when they came to the house they attacked the king, and Herse Klyp, it is said, run him through with his sword and killed him; but instantly Klyp was killed on the spot by Erling Gamle.

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King Harald Greyskin and his brother King Gudrod gathered together a great army in the east country, with which they set out northwards to Drontheim. When Earl Hakon heard of it he collected men, and set out to Möre, where he plundered. There his father's brother, Griotgaard, had the command and defence of the country on account of Gunhild's sons, and he assembled an army by order of the kings. Earl Hakon advanced to meet him, and gave him

CHAPTER  
XV.  
Griot-  
gaard's fall.

\* Hersen, — a title like Sir or Sira.

† Jernskiægge, — iron-beard.



SAGA V. battle; and there fell Griotgaard and two other earls, and many a man besides. So says Einar Skalamglam: —

“ The helm-crown’d Hakon, brave as stout,  
Again has put his foes to rout.  
The bowl runs o’er with Odin’s mead,\*  
That fires the scald when mighty deed  
Has to be sung. Earl Hakon’s sword,  
In single combat, as I’ve heard,  
Three sons of earls from this one fray  
To dwell with Odin drove away.”†

Thereafter Earl Hakon went out to sea, and sailed outside the coast, and came to Denmark. He went to the Danish king, Harald Gormeson, and was well received by him, and staid with him all winter. At that time there was also with the Danish king a man called Harald, a son of Knud Gormeson, and a brother’s son of King Harald. He was lately come home from a long viking cruise, on which he had gathered great riches, and therefore he was called Gold Harald. He seemed to stand a good chance of coming to the Danish kingdom.

CHAPTER  
XVI.  
King  
Erling’s  
fall.

King Harald Greyskin and his brothers proceeded northwards to Drontheim, where they met no opposition. They levied the scatt duties, and all other revenues, and laid heavy penalties upon the bonders; for the kings had for a long time received but little income from Drontheim, because Earl Hakon was there with many troops, and was at variance with these kings. In autumn King Harald went south with the greater part of the men-at-arms, but King Erling remained behind with his men. He raised great contributions from the bonders, and pressed severely on them; at which the bonders murmured greatly,

\* Odin’s mead, called Bodn, was the blood or mead the sons of Braga, the god of poets, drank to inspire them.

† To dwell with Odin, — viz. slew them.

and submitted to their losses with impatience. In winter they gathered together in a great force to go against King Erling, just as he was at a feast; and they gave battle to him, and he with the most of his men fell.

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While Gunhild's sons reigned in Norway the seasons were always bad, and the longer they reigned the worse were the crops; and the bonders laid the blame on them. They were very greedy, and used the bonders harshly. It came at length to be so bad that fish, as well as corn, were wanting. In Halogaland there was the greatest famine and distress; for scarcely any corn grew, and even snow was lying, and the cattle were bound in the byres all over the country until midsummer. Eyvind Skaldaspiller describes it in his poem, as he came outside of his house and found a thick snow-drift at that season:—

CHAPTER  
XVII.  
Of the  
seasons in  
Norway at  
this time.

“ ’Tis midsummer, yet deep snows rest  
On Odin's mother's frozen breast :  
Like Laplanders, our cattle-kind  
In stall or stable we must bind.”

Eyvind composed a poem about the people of Iceland, for which they rewarded him by each bonder giving him three silver pennies, of full weight and white in the fracture.\* And when the silver was brought together at the General Thing, the people resolved to have it purified, and made into a row of clasps; and after the workmanship of the silver was paid, the row of clasps was valued at fifty marks. This they sent to Eyvind; but Eyvind was obliged to separate the clasps from each other, and sell them to

CHAPTER  
XVIII.  
Of the Ice-  
landers and  
Eyvind  
Skalda-  
spiller.

\* These are curious circumstances of the importance of the art of the scald in the estimation of the Iceland people, of the state of their money, and of their dress. The row of clasps was probably similar to the rows of buttons still used by the Friesland fishermen for ornaments on their jackets.



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buy food for his household. But the same spring a shoal of herrings set in upon the fishing ground beyond the coast-side; and Eyvind manned a ship's boat with his house servants and cottars, and rowed to where the herrings were come, and sang:—

“ Now let the steed of ocean bound  
O'er the North Sea with dashing sound;  
Let nimble tern and screaming gull  
Fly round and round — our net is full.  
Fain would I know if Fortune sends  
A like provision to my friends.  
Welcome provision 'tis, I wot,  
That the whale drives to our cook's pot.”

So entirely were his moveable goods exhausted, that he was obliged to sell his arrows to buy herrings, or other meat for his table:—

“ Our arms and ornaments of gold  
To buy us food we gladly sold:  
The arrows of the bow gave we  
For the bright arrows of the sea.”\*

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\* Herrings, from their swift darting along, are called the arrows of the sea; and there is a play upon the words *pila* (arrows) and *sil* (herrings), as being similar somewhat in sound.

## VI.

SAGA VI.  

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## KING OLAF TRYGGVESSON'S SAGA.\*

KING Tryggve Olafsson had married a wife who was called Astrid. She was a daughter of Eric Biodaskalde, a great man, who dwelt at Ofrostad. But after Tryggve's death Astrid fled, and privately took with her all the loose property she could. Her foster-father, Thoralf Lusiskiaeg, followed her, and never left her; and others of her faithful followers spied about to discover her enemies, and where they were. Astrid was pregnant with a child of King Tryggve, and she went to a lake, and concealed herself in a holm or small island in it with a few men. Here her child was born, and it was a boy; and water was poured over it, and it was called Olaf after the grandfather. Astrid remained all summer here in concealment; but when the nights became dark, and the day began to shorten and the weather to be cold, she was obliged to take to the land, along with Thoralf and a few other men. They did not seek for houses, unless in the night time, when they came to them secretly; and they spoke to nobody. One evening, towards dark, they came to Ofrostad, where Astrid's father Eric dwelt, and privately sent a man to Eric to tell him; and Eric took them to an out-house, and spread a table for them with the best of food. When Astrid had been here a short time her travelling attendants left her, and

CHAPTER  
I.  
Olaf Trygg-  
vesson's  
birth.

\* Olaf Tryggvesson reigned from about the year 995 to the year 1000.

King Olaf, it will be remembered, was one of Harald Haarfager's sons; King Tryggve Olafsson was the son of this Olaf, and this Olaf Tryggvesson the son of Tryggve.



## SAGA VI.

none remained behind with her but two servant girls, her child Olaf, Thoralf Lusiskiæg, and his son Thor-gils, who was six years old; and they remained all winter.

CHAPTER  
II.  
Of Gun-  
hild's sons.

After Tryggve Olafsson's murder, Harald Grey-skin and his brother Gudrod went to the farm which he owned; but Astrid was gone, and they could learn no tidings of her. A loose report came to their ears that she was pregnant to King Tryggve; but they went away northwards, as before related. As soon as they met their mother Gunhild, they told her all that had taken place. She inquired particularly about Astrid, and they told her the report they had heard; but as Gunhild's sons the same harvest and winter after had bickerings with Earl Hakon, as before related, they did not seek after Astrid and her son that winter.

CHAPTER  
III.  
Astrid's  
journey.

The spring after Gunhild sent spies to the Uplands, and all the way down to Viken, to spy what they could about Astrid; and her men came back, and could only tell her that Astrid must be with her father Eric, and it was probable was bringing up her infant, the son of Tryggve. Then Gunhild, without delay, sent off men well furnished with arms and horses, and in all a troop of thirty; and as their leader she sent a particular friend of her own, a powerful man called Hakon. Her orders were to go to Ofrostad to Eric, and take King Tryggve's son from thence, and bring the child to her; and with these orders the men went out. Now when they were come to the neighbourhood of Ofrostad, some of Eric's friends observed the troop of travellers, and about the close of the day brought him word of their approach. Eric immediately, in the night, made preparation for Astrid's flight, gave her good guides, and sent her away eastward to Sweden, to his good friend Hakon Gamle, who was a powerful man there.

Long before day they departed, and towards evening they reached a domain called Skon. Here they saw a large mansion, towards which they went, and begged a night's lodging. For the sake of concealment they were clad in mean clothing. There dwelt here a bonder called Biorn Edderquise, who was very rich, but very inhospitable. He drove them away; and therefore, towards dark, they went to another domain close by that was called Vither. Thorstein was the name of the bonder; and he gave them lodging, and took good care of them, so that they slept well, and were well entertained. Early that morning Gunhild's men had come to Ofrostad, and inquired for Astrid and her son. As Eric told them she was not there, they searched the whole house, and remained till late in the day before they got any news of Astrid. Then they rode after her the way she had taken, and late at night they came to Biorn Edderquise in Skon, and took up their quarters there. Hakon asked Biorn if he knew any thing about Astrid, and he said some people had been there in the evening wanting lodgings; "but I drove them away, and I suppose they have gone to some of the neighbouring houses." Thorstein's labourer was coming from the forest, having left his work at night-fall, and called in at Biorn's house because it was in his way; and finding there were guests come to the house, and learning their business, he comes to Thorstein and tells him of it. As about a third part of the night was still remaining, Thorstein wakens his guests, and orders them in an angry voice to go about their business; but as soon as they were out of the house upon the road, Thorstein tells them that Gunhild's messengers were at Biorn's house, and are upon the trace of them. They entreat of him to help them, and he gave them a guide and some provisions. He conducted them through the forest to a lake, in which



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there was an islet overgrown with reeds. They waded out to the islet, and hid themselves among the reeds. Early in the morning Hakon rode away from Biorn's into the township, and wherever he came he asked after Astrid; and when he came to Thorstein's he asked if she had been there. He said that some people had been there; but as soon as it was daylight they had set off again, eastwards, to the forest. Hakon made Thorstein go along with them, as he knew all the roads and hiding-places. Thorstein went with them; but when they were come into the woods, he led them right across the way Astrid had taken. They went about and about the whole day to no purpose, as they could find no trace of her; so they turned back to tell Gunhild the end of their travel. Astrid and her friends proceeded on their journey, and came to Sweden, to Hakon Gamle (the Old), where she and her son remained a long time, and had friendly welcome.

CHAPTER  
IV.  
Hakon's  
embassy to  
Sweden.

When Gunhild, the mother of the kings, heard that Astrid and her son Olaf were in the kingdom of Sweden, she again sent Hakon, with a good attendance, eastward, to Eric king of Sweden, with presents and messages of friendship. The ambassadors were well received and well treated. Hakon, after a time, disclosed his errand to the king, saying that Gunhild had sent him with the request that the king would assist him in getting hold of Olaf Tryggvesson, to conduct him to Norway, where Gunhild would bring him up. The king gave Hakon people with him, and he rode with them to Hakon the Old, where Hakon desired, with many friendly expressions, that Olaf should go with him. Hakon the Old returned a friendly answer, saying that it depended entirely upon Olaf's mother. But Astrid would on no account listen to the proposal; and the messengers had to return as they came, and to tell King Eric how the

matter stood. The ambassadors then prepared to return home, and asked the king for some assistance to take the boy, whether Hakon the Old would or not. The king gave them again some attendants; and when they came to Hakon the Old, they again asked for the boy, and on his refusal to deliver him they used high words and threatened violence. But one of the slaves, Burst by name, attacked Hakon, and was going to kill him; and they barely escaped from the thralls without a cudgelling, and proceeded home to Norway to tell Gunhild their ill success, and that they had only seen Olaf.

Astrid had a brother called Sigurd, a son of Eric Biodaskalde, who had long been abroad in Russia with King Valdemar, and was there in great consideration. Astrid had now a great inclination to travel to her brother there. Hakon the Old gave her good attendants, and what was needful for the journey, and she set out with some merchants. She had then been two years with Hakon the Old, and Olaf was three years of age. As they sailed out into the Baltic, they were captured by vikings of Esthonia, who made booty both of the people and goods, killing some, and dividing others as slaves. Olaf was separated from his mother, and an Esthonian man called Klerkon got him as his share along with Thoralf and Thorkils. Klerkon thought that Thoralf was too old for a slave, and that there was not much work to be got out of him, so he killed him; but took the boys with him, and sold them to a man called Klærk for a stout and good ram. A third man, called Reas, bought Olaf for a good cloak. Reas had a wife called Rekon, and a son by her whose name was Rekoni. Olaf was long with them, was treated well, and was much beloved by the people. Olaf was six years in Esthonia in this banishment.



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## CHAPTER

## VI.

Olaf is set  
free in  
Esthonia.

Sigurd, the son of Eric (Astrid's brother), came into Esthonia from Novogorod, on King Valdemar's business to collect the king's taxes and rents. Sigurd came as a man of consequence, with many followers and great magnificence. In the market-place he happened to observe a remarkably handsome boy; and as he could distinguish that he was a foreigner, he asked him his name and family. He answered him, that his name was Olaf; that he was a son of Tryggve Olafsson; and Astrid, a daughter of Eric Biodaskalde, was his mother. Then Sigurd knew that the boy was his sister's son, and asked him how he came there. Olaf told him minutely all his adventures, and Sigurd told him to follow him to the peasant Reas'. When he came there he bought both the boys, Olaf and Thorgils, and took them with him to Novogorod. But, for the first, he made nothing known of Olaf's relationship to him, but treated him well.

## CHAPTER

## VII.

Klerkon  
killed by  
Olaf.

Olaf Tryggvesson was one day in the market-place, where there was a great number of people. He recognised Klærkon again, who had killed his foster-father Thoralf Lusiskiæg. Olaf had a little axe in his hand, and with it he clove Klærkon's scull down to the brain, and ran home to his lodging, and told his friend Sigurd what he had done. Sigurd immediately took Olaf to Queen Allogia's house, told her what had happened, and begged her to protect the boy. She replied, that the boy appeared far too comely to allow him to be slain; and she ordered her people to be drawn out fully armed. In Novogorod, the sacredness of peace is so respected, that it is law there to slay whoever puts a man to death except by judgment of law; and, according to this law and usage, the whole people stormed and sought after the boy. It was reported that he was in the queen's house, and that there was a number of armed men there. When this was told to the king, he went there with his

people, but would allow no bloodshed. It was settled at last in peace, that the king should name the fine for the murder; and the queen paid it. Olaf remained afterwards with the queen, and was much beloved. It is a law at Novogorod, that no man of a royal descent shall stay there without the king's permission. Sigurd therefore told the queen of what family Olaf was, and for what reason he had come to Russia; namely, that he could not remain with safety in his own country: and begged her to speak to the king about it. She did so, and begged the king to help a king's son whose fate had been so hard; and in consequence of her entreaty the king promised to assist him, and accordingly he received Olaf into his court, and treated him nobly, and as a king's son. Olaf was nine years old when he came to Russia, and he remained nine years more with king Valdemar. Olaf was the handsomest of men, very stout and strong, and in all bodily exercises he excelled every Northman that ever was heard of.

Earl Hakon, Sigurd's son, was with the Danish king, Harald Gormson, the winter after he had fled from Norway before Gunhild's sons. During the winter the earl had so much care and sorrow that he took to bed, and passed many sleepless nights, and ate and drank no more than was needful to support his strength. Then he sent a private message to his friends north in Drontheim, and proposed to them that they should kill King Erling, if they had an opportunity; adding, that he would come to them in summer. The same winter the Drontheim people accordingly, as before related, killed King Erling. There was great friendship between Earl Hakon and Gold Harald, and Harald told Hakon all his intentions. He told him that he was tired of a ship-life, and wanted to settle on the land; and asked Hakon if he thought his brother King Harald would agree to

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CHAPTER  
VIII.  
Of Hakon  
Earl of  
Lade.



## SAGA VI.

divide the the kingdom with him if he asked it. "I think," replied Hakon, "that the Danish king would not deny thy right; but the best way to know is to speak to the king himself. I know for certain so much, that you will not get a kingdom if you don't ask for it." Soon after this conversation Gold Harald spoke to the king about the matter, in the presence of many great men who were friends to both; and Gold Harald asked King Harald to divide the kingdom with him in two equal parts, to which his royal birth and the custom of the Danish monarchy gave him right. The king was highly incensed at this demand, and said that no man had asked his father Gorm to be king over half of Denmark, nor yet his grandfather King Hordeknut, or Sigurd Orm, or Ragnar Lodbrok; and he was so exasperated and angry, that nobody ventured to speak of it to him.

CHAPTER  
IX.  
Of Gold  
Harald.

Gold Harald was now worse off than before; for he had got no kingdom, and had got the king's anger by proposing it. He went as usual to his friend Hakon, and complained to him of his fate, and asked for good advice, and if he could help him to get his share of the kingdom; saying that he would rather try force, and the chance of war, than give it up.

Hakon advised him not to speak to any man so that this should be known; "for," said he, "it concerns thy life: and rather consider with thyself what thou art man enough to undertake; for to accomplish such a purpose requires a bold and firm man, who will neither stick at good nor evil to do that which is intended; for to take up great resolutions, and then to lay them aside, would only end in dishonour."

Gold Harald replies, — "I will so carry on what I begin, that I will not hesitate to kill Harald with my own hands, if I can come thereby to the kingdom he denies me, and which is mine by right." And so they separated.

Now King Harald comes also to Earl Hakon, and tells him the demand on his kingdom which Gold Harald had made, and also his answer, and that he would upon no account consent to diminish his kingdom. "And if Gold Harald persists in his demand, I will have no hesitation in having him killed; for I will not trust him if he does not renounce it."

The earl answered,—“ My thoughts are, that Harald has carried his demand so far that he cannot now let it drop, and I expect nothing but war in the land; and that he will be able to gather a great force, because his father was so beloved. And then it would be a great enormity if you were to kill your relation; for, as things now stand, all men would say that he was innocent. But I am far from saying, or advising, that you should make yourself a smaller king than your father Gorm was, who in many ways enlarged, but never diminished his kingdom.”

The king replies, —“ What then is your advice,—if I am neither to divide my kingdom, nor to get rid of my fright and danger?”

“ Let us meet again in a few days,” said Earl Hakon, “ and I will then have considered the matter well, and will give you my advice upon it.”

The king then went away with his people.

Earl Hakon had now great reflection, and many opinions to weigh, and he let only very few be in the house with him. In a few days King Harald came again to the earl to speak with him, and ask if he had yet considered fully the matter they had been talking of.

CHAPTER  
X.  
Councils  
held by  
Earl Ha-  
kon and  
King Ha-  
rald.

“ I have,” said the earl, “ considered it night and day ever since, and find it most advisable that you retain and rule over the whole of your kingdom just as your father left it; but that you obtain for your relation Harald another kingdom, that he also may enjoy honour and dignity.”



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“What kind of kingdom is that,” said the king, “which I can give to Harald, that I may possess Denmark entire?”

“It is Norway,” said the earl. “The kings who are there are oppressive to the people of the country, so that every man is against them who has tax or service to pay.”

The king replies,—“Norway is a large country, and the people fierce, and not good to attack with a foreign army. We found that sufficiently when Hakon defended that country; for we lost many people, and gained no victory. Besides, Harald the son of Eric is my foster-son, and has sat on my knee.”

The earl answers,—“I have long known that you have helped Gunhild’s sons with your force, and a bad return you have got for it; but we shall get at Norway much more easily than by fighting for it with all the Danish force. Send a message to your foster-son Harald, Eric’s son, and offer him the lands and fiefs which Gunhild’s sons held before in Denmark. Appoint him a meeting, and Gold Harald will soon conquer for himself a kingdom in Norway from Harald Greyskin.”

The king replies, that it would be called a bad business to deceive his own foster-son.

“The Danes,” answered the earl, “will rather say that it was better to kill a Norwegian viking than a Danish, and your own brother’s son.”

They spoke so long over the matter, that they agreed on it.

CHAPTER  
XI.  
King  
Harald  
Gormsson’s  
message to  
Norway.

Thereafter Gold Harald had a conference with Earl Hakon; and the earl told him he had now advanced his business so far, that there was hope a kingdom might stand open for him in Norway. “We can then continue,” said he, “our ancient friendship, and I can be of the greatest use to you in Norway. Take first that kingdom. King Harald is now very old, and

has but one son, and cares but little about him, as he is but the son of a concubine."

The earl talked so long to Gold Harald that the project pleased him well ; and the king, the earl, and Gold Hakon often talked over the business together. The Danish king then sent messengers north to Norway to Harald Greyskin, and fitted them out magnificently for their journey. They were well received by Harald. The messengers told him that Earl Hakon was in Denmark, but was lying dangerously sick, and almost out of his senses. They then delivered from Harald, the Danish king, the invitation to Harald Greyskin, his foster-son, to come to him, and receive investiture of the fiefs he and his brothers before him had formerly held in Denmark ; and appointing a meeting in Jutland. Harald Greyskin laid the matter before his mother and other friends. Their opinions were divided. Some thought that the expedition was not without its danger, on account of the men with whom they had to deal ; but the most were in haste to begin the journey, for at that time there was such a famine in Norway that the kings could scarcely feed their men-at-arms : and on this account the Fiord, on which the kings resided, usually got the name of Hardanger (Hard-acre). In Denmark, on the other hand, there had been tolerably good crops ; so that people thought that if King Harald got fiefs, and something to rule over there, they would get some assistance. It was therefore concluded, before the messengers returned, that Harald should travel to Denmark to the Danish king in summer, and accept the conditions King Harald offered.

Harald Greyskin went to Denmark in summer with three long-ships ; and Herse Asbiorn, from the Fiord district, commanded one of them. King Harald sailed from Viken over to Lymfiord in Jutland, and landed



SAGA VI.  
Hakon to-  
wards Gold  
Harald.

at the narrow neck of land\* where the Danish king was expected. Now when Gold Harald heard of this, he sailed there with nine ships which he had fitted out before for a viking cruise. Earl Hakon had also his war force on foot; namely, twelve large ships, all ready, with which he proposed to make an expedition. When Gold Harald had departed, Earl Hakon says to the king, "Now I don't know if we are not sailing on an expedition, and yet are to pay the penalty of not having joined it. Gold Harald may kill Harald Grey-skin, and get the kingdom of Norway; but you must not think he will be true to you, although you do help him to so much power, for he told me in winter that he would take your life if he could find opportunity to do so. Now I will win Norway for you, and kill Gold Harald, if you will promise me a good condition under you. I will be your earl; swear an oath of fidelity to you, and, with your help, conquer all Norway for you; hold the country under your rule; pay you the scatt and taxes; and you will be a greater king than your father, as you will have two kingdoms under you." The king and the earl agreed upon this, and Hakon set off to seek Gold Harald.

CHAPTER  
XIII.  
Harald  
Graafeld  
falls at the  
neck of  
land at  
Lymfiord.

Gold Harald came to the neck of land at Lymfiord, and immediately challenged Harald Greyskin to battle; and although Harald had fewer men, he went immediately on the land, prepared for battle, and drew up his troops. Before the lines came together Harald Greyskin urged on his men, and told them to draw their swords. He himself advanced the foremost of the troop, hewing down on each side. So says Glum Geirason, in Greyskin's lay:—

\* Lymfiord, running in from the Baltic across the peninsula of Jutland, is only divided by a narrow neck of land from the North Sea. This neck has within these fifteen years been washed away, and there is now a channel into the Baltic by this new passage for small craft.

“ Brave were thy words in battle-field,  
 Thou stainer of the snow-white shield ! —  
 Thou gallant war-god ! With thy voice  
 Thou couldst the dying man rejoice :  
 The cheer of Harald could impart  
 Courage and life to every heart.  
 While swinging high the blood-smeared sword,  
 By arm and voice we knew our lord.”

There fell Harald Greyskin. So says Glum Geirason : —

“ On Lymfiord’s strand, by the tide’s flow,  
 Stern Fate has laid King Harald low ;  
 The gallant viking-cruiser — he  
 Who loved the isle-encircling sea.  
 The generous ruler of the land  
 Fell at the narrow Lymfiord strand,  
 Enticed by Hakon’s cunning speech  
 To his death-bed on Lymfiord’s beach.”

The most of King Harald’s men fell with him. There also fell Herse Asbiorn.

This happened fifteen years\* after the death of Hakon Athelstan’s foster-son, and thirteen years after that of Sigurd earl of Lade. The priest Are Frode says that Earl Hakon was thirteen years earl over his father’s dominions in Drontheim district before the fall of Harald Greyskin ; but, for the last six years of Harald Greyskin’s life, Are Frode says the Earl Hakon and Gunhild’s sons fought against each other, and drove each other out of the land in turns.

Soon after Harald Greyskin’s fall, Earl Hakon came up to Gold Harald, and the earl immediately gave battle to Harald. Hakon gained the victory, and Harald was made prisoner ; but Hakon had him immediately hanged on a gallows. Hakon then went to the Danish king, and no doubt easily settled with him for the killing his relative Gold Harald.

CHAPTER  
XIV.  
Gold Harald’s death.

\* This brings the reign of Harald Greyskin to about the year 975.



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CHAPTER  
XV.Division of  
the country.

Soon after King Harald Gormson ordered a levy of men over all his kingdom, and sailed with 600 ships. There were with him Earl Hakon, Harald Grænske a son of King Gudrod, and many other great men who had fled from their udal estates in Norway on account of Gunhild's sons. The Danish king sailed with his fleet from the south to Viken, where all the people of the country surrendered to him. When he came to Tunsberg swarms of people joined him; and King Harald gave to Earl Hakon the command of all the men who came to him in Norway, and gave him the government over Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn, Fiorde district, South Möre, Raumsdal, and North Möre. These seven districts gave King Harald to Earl Hakon to rule over, with the same rights as Harald Haarfager gave with them to his sons; only with the difference, that Hakon should there, as well as in Drontheim, have the king's land-estates and land-tax, and use the king's money and goods according to his necessities whenever there was war in the country. King Harald also gave Harald Grænske Vingulmark, Westfold, and Agder all the way to the Naze, together with the title of king; and let him have these dominions with the same rights as his family in former times had held them, and as Harald Haarfager had given with them to his sons. Harald Grænske was then eighteen years old, and he became afterwards a celebrated man. Harald king of Denmark returned home thereafter with all his army.

CHAPTER  
XVI.Gunhild's  
sons leave  
the country.

Earl Hakon proceeded northwards along the coast with his force; and when Gunhild and her sons got the tidings they proceeded to gather troops, but were ill off for men. Then they took the same resolution as before, to sail out to sea with such men as would follow them away to the westward. They came first to the Orkney Islands, and remained there a while. There were in Orkney then the Earls

Lodver, Arnvid, Liod, and Skule\*, the sons of Thorfin Hausakliffer. SAGA VI.

Earl Hakon now brought all the country under him, and remained all winter in Drontheim. Einar Skalaglam speaks of his conquests in Vellekla:—

“Norway’s great watchman, Harald, now  
May bind the silk snood on his brow —  
Seven provinces he seized. The realm  
Prosper with Hakon at the helm.”

As Hakon the earl proceeded this summer along the coast subjecting all the people to him, he ordered that over all his dominions the temples and sacrifices should be restored, and continued as of old. So it is said in the Vellekla:—

“Hakon the earl, so good and wise,  
Let all the ancient temples rise; —  
Thor’s temples raised with fostering hand,  
That had been ruined through the land.  
His valiant champions, who were slain  
On battle-fields across the main,  
To Thor, the thunder-god, may tell  
How for the gods all turns out well.  
The hardy warrior now once more  
Offers the sacrifice of gore;  
The shield-bearer in Loke’s game †  
Invokes once more great Asa’s name; ‡  
The green earth gladly yields her store,  
As she was wont in days of yore,  
Since the brave breaker of the spears  
The holy shrines again uprears.  
The earl has conquered with strong hand  
All that lies north of Viken land:  
In battle storm, and iron rain,  
Hakon spreads wide his sword’s domain.”

The first winter that Hakon ruled over Norway the herrings set in every where through the fiords to the land, and the seasons ripened to a good crop all that had been sown. The people, therefore, laid in seed

\* The ancient family of Scollay in Orkney may probably derive their name from this chief.

† Loke’s game is war.

‡ The name of Odin.



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for the next year, and got their lands sowed, and had hope of good times.

CHAPTER  
XVII.

Earl Hakon's battle  
with Ragn-  
frid.

King Ragnfrid and King Gudrod, both sons of Gunhild and Eric, were now the only sons of Gunhild remaining in life. So says Glum Geirason in Greyskin's lay:—

“ When in the battle's bloody strife  
The sword took noble Harald's life,  
Half of my fortunes with him fell :  
But his two brothers, I know well,  
My loss would soon repair, should they  
Again in Norway bear the sway,  
And to their promises should stand,  
If they return to rule the land.”

Ragnfrid began his course in the spring after he had been a year in the Orkney Islands. He sailed from thence to Norway, and had with him fine troops, and large ships. When he came to Norway he learnt that Earl Hakon was in Drontheim ; therefore he steered northwards around Stad, and plundered in South Möre. Some people submitted to him; for it often happens, when parties of armed men scour over a country, that those who are nearest the danger seek help where they think it may be expected. As soon as Earl Hakon heard the news of disturbance in Möre, he fitted out ships, sent the war-token through the land, made ready in all haste, and proceeded out of the fiord. He had no difficulty in assembling men. Ragnfrid and Earl Hakon met at the north corner of Möre; and Hakon, who had most men, but fewer ships, began the battle. The combat was severe, but heaviest on Hakon's side; and, as the custom then was, they fought bow to bow, and there was a current in the sound which drove all the ships in upon the land. The earl ordered to row with the oars to the land where landing seemed easiest. When the ships were all grounded, the earl with all his men left them, and drew them up so far that the enemy

might not launch them down again, and then drew up his men on a grass field, and challenged Ragnfrid to land. Ragnfrid and his men laid their vessels in along the land, and they shot at each other a long time; but upon the land Ragnfrid would not venture: and so they separated. Ragnfrid sailed with his fleet southwards around Stad; for he was much afraid the whole forces of the country would swarm around Hakon. Hakon, on his part, was not inclined to try again a battle, for he thought the difference between their ships in size was too great; so in harvest he went north to Drontheim, and staid there all winter. King Ragnfrid consequently had all the country south of Stad at his mercy; namely, Fiord district, Hordaland, Sogn, Rogaland; and he had many people about him all winter. When spring approached he ordered out the people, and collected a large force. By going about the districts he got many men, ships, and warlike stores sent as he required.

Towards spring Earl Hakon ordered out all the men north in the country, and got many people from Halogaland and Naumadal; so that from Byrda \* to Stad he had men from all the sea coast. It was said for certain that he had men from four great districts, and that seven earls followed him, and a matchless number of men. So it is said in the *Vel-lekla*:—

CHAPTER  
XVIII.  
Another  
battle be-  
tween Earl  
Hakon and  
Ragnfrid  
in Sogn.

“ Hakon, defender of the land,  
Armed in the North his warrior-band;  
To Sogne's shore † his force he led,  
And from all quarters thither sped  
War-ships and men; and haste was made  
By the young god of the sword-blade,  
The hero-viking of the wave,  
His wide domain from foes to save.

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\* Byrda, now Borö, in the parish of Biorn Isles, on the coast, near the mouth of the Namsen river, or Naumadal.

† Sogne fiord.



SAAG VI.

With shining keels seven kings sailed on  
 To meet this raven-feeding one.  
 When the clash came, the stunning sound  
 Was heard in Norway's farthest bound;  
 And sea-borne corpses, floating far,  
 Brought round the Naze news from the war."

Earl Hakon sailed then with his fleet southwards around Stad; and when he heard that King Ragnfrid with his army had gone towards Sogn, he turned there also with his men to meet him: and there Ragnfrid and Hakon met. Hakon came to the land with his ships, marked out a battle-field with hazel branches for King Ragnfrid\*, and took ground for his own men in it. So it is told in the Vellekla:—

"In the fierce battle Ragnfrid then  
 Met the grim foe of Vendland men;†  
 And many a hero of great name  
 Fell in the sharp sword's bloody game.  
 The wielder of fell Narve's weapon,‡  
 The conquering hero, valiant Hakon,  
 Had laid his war-ships on the strand,  
 And ranged his warriors on the land."

There was a great battle; but Earl Hakon, having by far the most people, gained the victory. It took place on the Thing-ness where Sogn and Hordaland meet.§

King Ragnfrid fled to his ships, after 300 of his men had fallen. So it is said in the Vellekla:—

"Sharp was the battle-strife, I ween,—  
 Deadly and close it must have been,  
 Before, upon the bloody plain,  
 Three hundred corpses of the slain

\* This marking out a champ clos for battle appears to have been common among the Northmen.

† Earl Hakon, from his victories over them, is called the foe of the Vendland men.

‡ Narve was the son of Loke; and the sword was called Narve's weapon.

§ Things were generally held on nesses or tongues accessible by water, as roads were not formed.

Were stretched for the black raven's prey ;  
 And when the conquerors took their way  
 To the sea-shore, they had to tread  
 O'er piled-up heaps of foemen dead."

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After this battle King Ragnfrid fled from Norway; but Earl Hakon restored peace to the country, and allowed the great army which had followed him in summer to return home to the north country, and he himself remained in the south that harvest and winter.

Earl Hakon married a girl called Thora, a daughter of the powerful Skage Skoptason, and very beautiful she was. They had two sons, Swend and Heming, and a daughter called Bergliot, who was afterwards married to Einar Tambarskielver. Earl Hakon was much addicted to women, and had many children; among others a daughter Ragnhild, whom he married to Skopte Skagason, a brother of Thora. The Earl loved Thora so much, that he held Thora's family in higher respect than any other people, and Skopte his brother-in-law in particular; and he gave him many great fiefs in Möre. Whenever they were on a cruise together, Skopte must lay his ship nearest to the earl's, and no other ship was allowed to come in between.

CHAPTER  
XIX.  
Earl Ha-  
kon's mar-  
riage.

One summer that Earl Hakon was on a cruise, there was a ship with him of which Thorleif the Wise was steersman. In it was also Eric, Earl Hakon's son, then about ten or eleven years old. Now in the evenings, as they came into harbour, Eric would not allow any ship but his to lie nearest to the earl's. But when they came to the south, to Möre, they met Skopte, the earl's brother-in-law, with a well-manned ship; and as they rowed towards the fleet, Skopte called out that Thorleif should move out of the harbour to make room for him, and should go to the roadstead. Eric in haste took up the matter, and

CHAPTER  
XX.  
Skopte the  
Newsman's  
death.



## SAGA VI.

ordered Skopte to go himself to the roadstead. When Earl Hakon heard that his son thought himself too great to give place to Skopte, he called to them immediately that they should haul out from their berth, threatening them with chastisement if they did not. When Thorleif heard this, he ordered his men to slip their land-cable, and they did so; and Skopte laid his vessel next to the earl's, as he used to do. When they came together, Skopte brought the earl all the news he had gathered, and the earl communicated to Skopte all the news he had heard; and Skopte was therefore called the Newsman. The winter after Eric was with his foster-father Thorleif, and early in spring he gathered a crew of followers, and Thorleif gave him a boat of fifteen benches of rowers, with ship furniture, tents, and ship provisions; and Eric set out from the fiord, and southwards to Möre. Newsman Skopte happened also to be going with a fully manned boat of fifteen rowers' benches from one of his farms to another, and Eric went against him to have a battle. Skopte was slain, but Eric granted life to those of his men who were still on their legs. So says Eyolf Dadaskald in the Banda lay:—

“ At eve the youth went out  
 To meet the warrior stout —  
 To meet stout Skopte — he  
 Whose war-ship roves the sea.  
 Like force was on each side,  
 But in the whirling tide  
 The young wolf Eric slew  
 Skopte, and all his crew:  
 And he was a gallant one,  
 Dear to the Earl Hakon.  
 Up, youth of steel-hard breast —  
 No time hast thou to rest!  
 Thy ocean wings spread wide —  
 Speed o'er the foaming tide!  
 Speed on — speed on thy way!  
 For here thou canst not stay.” •

Eric sailed along the land and came to Denmark, and went to King Harald Gormeson, and staid with him all winter. In spring the Danish king sent him north to Norway, and gave him an earldom, and the government of Vingulmark and Raumarige, on the same terms as the small scatt-paying kings had formerly held these domains. So says Eyolf Dada-skald: —

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“ South through ocean’s spray  
His dragon flew away  
To Gormson’s hall renowned,  
Where the bowl goes bravely round.  
And the Danish king did place  
This youth of noble race  
Where, shield and sword in hand,  
He would aye defend his land.”

Eric became afterwards a great chief.

All this time Olaf Tryggvesson was in Russia, and highly esteemed by King Valdemar, and beloved by the queen. King Valdemar made him chief over the men-at-arms whom he sent out to defend the land. So says Hallarstein: —

CHAPTER  
XXI.  
Olaf  
Tryg-  
gvesson’s  
journey  
from  
Russia.

“ The hater of the niggard hand,\*  
The chief who loves the Northman’s land,  
Was only twelve years old when he  
His Russian war-ships put to sea.  
The wain that ploughs the sea was then  
Loaded with war-gear by his men —  
With swords, and spears, and helms; and deep  
Out to the sea his good ships sweep.”

Olaf had several battles, and was lucky as a leader of troops. He himself kept a great many men-at-arms at his own expense out of the pay the king gave him. Olaf was very generous to his men, and therefore very popular. But then it came to pass, what so often happens when a foreigner is raised to

\* The original figure of expression is, “hater of the fire of the bow’s seat:” viz. the seat of the bow is the hand; the fire of the hand the gold-rings worn on the fingers; the hater of this fire he who does not care for it, but parts with it readily — the generous man.



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higher power and dignity than men of the country, that many envied him because he was so favoured by the king, and also not less so by the queen. They hinted to the king that he should take care not to make Olaf too powerful, — “for such a man may be dangerous to you, if he were to allow himself to be used for the purpose of doing you or your kingdom harm; for he is extremely expert in all exercises and feats, and very popular. We do not, indeed, know what it is he can have to talk of so often with the queen.” It was then the custom among great monarchs that the queen should have half of the court attendants, and she supported them at her own expense out of the scatt and revenue provided for her for that purpose. It was so also at the court of King Valdemar that the queen had an attendance as large as the king, and they vied with each other about the finest men, each wanting to have such in their own service. It so fell out that the king listened to such speeches, and became somewhat silent and blunt towards Olaf. When Olaf observed this, he told it to the queen; and also that he had a great desire to travel to the Northern land, where his family formerly had power and kingdoms, and where it was most likely he would advance himself. The queen wished him a prosperous journey, and said he would be found a brave man wherever he might be. Olaf then made ready, went on board, and set out to sea in the Baltic. So says Marcus Skeggiason in “*Rekstefen* :” —

“ The Russian cutters start from land,  
Under the generous chief’s command,-  
Out to the open sea they run,  
Under the gallant Tryggve’s son :  
And, ranging all the western coast,  
Olaf the brave, who led the host,  
Made many a sturdy foeman feel  
The sharp edge of his biting steel.”

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As he was coming from the east he made the island of Bornholm, where he landed and plundered. The country people hastened down to the strand, and gave him battle; but Olaf gained the victory, and a large booty.

While Olaf lay at Bornholm there came on bad weather, storm, and a heavy sea, so that his ships could not lie there; and he sailed southwards under Vendland\*, where they found a good harbour. They conducted themselves very peacefully, and remained some time. In Vendland there was then a king called Burislaf, who had three daughters,—Geyra, Gunhild, and Astrid. The king's daughter Geyra had the power and government in that part where Olaf and his people landed, and Dixin was the name of the man who most usually advised Queen Geyra. Now when they heard that unknown people were come to the country, who were of distinguished appearance, and conducted themselves peaceably, Dixin repaired to them with a message from Queen Geyra, inviting the strangers to take up their winter abode with her; for the summer was almost spent, and the weather was severe and stormy. Now when Dixin came to the place he soon saw that the leader was a distinguished man, both from family and personal appearance, and he told Olaf the queen's invitation with the most friendly message. Olaf willingly accepted the invitation, and went in harvest to Queen Geyra. They liked each other exceedingly, and Olaf courted Queen Geyra; and it was so settled that Olaf married her the same winter, and was ruler, along with Queen Geyra, over her dominions. Halfred Vandrædaskald tells of these matters in the lay he composed about King Olaf:—

CHAPTER  
XXII.  
Olaf  
Tryg-  
gvesson's  
marriage.

\* Vindland or Vendland—the land of the Vends or Vands, the Slavonic people who then occupied the coast from the Vistula to Holstein. The Vendland of the saga is the present Mecklenburg, Pomerania, and East Prussia.



## SAGA VI.

“Why should the deeds the hero did  
In Bornholm and the East be hid?  
His deadly weapon Olaf bold  
Dyed red: why should not this be told?”

CHAPTER  
XXIII.  
Earl Hakon pays  
no scatt

Earl Hakon ruled over Norway, and paid no scatt; because the Danish king gave him all the scatt revenue that belonged to the king in Norway, for the expense and trouble he had in defending the country against Gunhild's sons.

CHAPTER  
XXIV.  
King Harald's levy  
to oppose  
the Em-  
peror  
Otto's de-  
mand to  
introduce  
Chris-  
tianity in  
his king-  
dom.

The Emperor Otto was at that time in the Saxon country, and sent a message to King Harald, the Danish king, that he must take on the true faith and be baptized, he and all his people whom he ruled; “otherwise,” says the emperor, “we will march against him with an army.” The Danish king ordered the land defence to be fitted out, the Danish wall\* to be well fortified, and his ships of war rigged out. He sent a message also to Earl Hakon in Norway to come to him early in spring, and with as many men as he could possibly raise. In spring Earl Hakon levied an army over the whole country which was very numerous, and with it he sailed to meet the Danish king. The king received him in the most honourable manner. Many other chiefs also joined the Danish king with their men, so that he had gathered a very large army.

CHAPTER  
XXV.  
Olaf  
Tryg-  
gvesson's  
war expe-  
dition.

Olaf Tryggvesson had been all winter in Vendland, as before related, and went the same winter to the baronies in Vendland which had formerly been under Queen Geyra, but had withdrawn themselves from obedience and payment of taxes. There Olaf made war, killed many people, burnt out others, took much property, and laid all of them under subjection

\* Danaverki. The Danish work was a wall of earth, stones, and wood, with a deep ditch in front, and a castle at every hundred fathoms, between the rivers Eyder and Sle, constructed by Harald Blaaland to oppose the progress of Charlemagne. Some traces of it still exist.

to him, and then went back to his castle. Early in spring Olaf rigged out his ships and set off to sea. He sailed to Scania\*, and made a landing. The people of the country assembled, and gave him battle; but King Olaf conquered, and made a great booty. He then sailed eastward to the island of Gotland, where he captured a merchant vessel belonging to the people of Jemteland.† They made a brave defence; but the end of it was that Olaf cleared the deck, killed all the men, and took all the goods. He had a third battle in Gotland, in which he also gained the victory, and made a great booty. So says Halfred Vandrædaskald:—

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“ The king, so fierce in battle-fray,  
First made the Vendland men give way:  
The Gotlanders must tremble next;  
And Scania’s shores are sorely vexed  
By the sharp pelting arrow shower  
The hero and his warriors pour;  
And then the Jemtland men must fly,  
Scared by his well-known battle-cry.”

The Emperor Otto assembled a great army from Saxonland‡, Frakland§, Friesland||, and Vendland.¶ King Burislaaf followed him with a large army, and in it was his son-in-law, Olaf Tryggvesson. The emperor had a great body of horsemen, and still greater of foot people, and a great army from Holstein.\*\* Harald, the Danish king, sent Earl Hakon with the

CHAPTER  
XXVI.  
The Emperor Otto  
and Earl Hakon  
have a battle at  
the Danish  
dyke in  
Schleswig.

\* The large part of Sweden, or of the country on the Swedish side of the Sound, called Scania, belonged in the earliest times to the kingdom of Denmark.

† Jemteland is the province still so called on the Swedish side of a ridge of hills, or keel of the peninsula, at the head of the Bothnian Gulph.

‡ Saxonland, or Germany.

§ Frakkaland, or Frankland, is France.

|| Friesland, the low countries about the Ems.

¶ Vendland is the present Pomerania and Mecklenburg down to the Gulph of Lubeck.

\*\* Holsetta-land is Holstein.



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army of Northmen that followed him southwards to the Danish wall, to defend his kingdom on that side. So it is told in the "Vellekla:"—

"Over the foaming salt sea spray  
The Norse sea-horses took their way,  
Racing across the ocean-plain  
Southwards to Denmark's green domain.  
The gallant chief of Hordaland \*  
Sat at the helm with steady hand,  
In casque and shield, his men to bring  
From Dovre to his friend the king.  
He steered his war-ships o'er the wave  
To help the Danish king to save  
Mordalf, who, with a gallant band,  
Was hastening from the Jutes' wild land,  
Across the forest frontier rude,  
With toil and pain through the thick wood.  
Glad was the Danish king, I trow,  
When he saw Hakon's galley's prow.  
The monarch straightway gave command  
To Hakon, with a steel-clad band,  
To man the Dane-work's rampart stout,  
And keep the foreign foemen out."

The Emperor Otto came with his army from the south to the Danish wall, but Earl Hakon defended the rampart with his men. The Dane-work was constructed in this way:—Two fiords run into the land, one on each side; and in the farthest bight of these fiords the Danes had made a great wall of stone, turf, and timber, and dug a deep and broad ditch in front of it, and had also built a castle over each gate of it. There was a hard battle there, of which the "Vellekla" speaks:—

"Thick the storm of arrows flew,  
Loud was the din, black was the view  
Of close array of shield and spear  
Of Vend, and Frank, and Saxon there.  
But little recked our gallant men;  
And loud the cry might be heard then  
Of Norway's brave sea-roving son —  
'On 'gainst the foe! on! lead us on!'"

---

\* Earl Hakon. Hordaland is often used for Norway by the scald.

Earl Hakon drew up his people in ranks upon all the gate-towers of the wall, but the greater part of them he kept marching along the wall to make a defence wheresoever an attack was threatened. Many of the emperor's people fell without making any impression on the fortification, so the emperor turned back without farther attempt at an assault on it. So it is said in the "Vellekla:"—

"They who the eagle's feast provide  
In ranked line fought side by side,  
'Gainst lines of war-men under shields  
Close packed together on the fields.  
Earl Hakon drives by daring deeds  
These Saxons to their ocean-steeds;  
And the young hero saves from fall  
The Danaverk — the people's wall."

After this battle Earl Hakon went back to his ships, and intended to sail home to Norway; but he did not get a favourable wind, and lay for some time outside at Lymfiord.

The Emperor Otto turned back with his troops to Sleswick, collected his ships of war, and crossed the fiord of Sle\* into Jutland. As soon as the Danish king heard of this he marched his army against him, and there was a battle, in which the emperor at last got the victory. The Danish king fled to Lymfiord, and took refuge in the island Morsey.† By the help of mediators who went between the king and the emperor, a truce and a meeting between them were agreed on. The Emperor Otto and the Danish king met upon Mors Isle. There Bishop Poppo instructed King Harald in the holy faith; and thereafter King Harald allowed himself to be baptized, and also the whole Danish army. King Hakon, while he was in Mors Isle, had sent a message to Hakon that he should

CHAPTER  
XXVII.  
King Ha-  
rald and  
Earl  
Hakon are  
baptized.

\* The fiord now called Slie runs up to the town of Sleswick.

† Morsey is now called Mors, an island in the Lymfiord.



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come to his succour ; and the earl had just reached the island when the king had received baptism. The king sends word to the earl to come to him, and when they met the king forced the earl to allow himself also to be baptized. So Earl Hakon and all the men who were with him were baptized ; and the king gave them priests and other learned men with them, and ordered that the earl should make all the people in Norway be baptized. On that they separated ; and the earl went out to sea, there to wait for a wind.

CHAPTER  
XXVIII.  
Earl Hakon re-  
nounces the  
Christian  
faith, and  
plunders in  
Gotland.

When a wind came with which he thought he could get clear out to sea, he put all the learned men on shore again, and set off to the ocean ; but as the wind came round to south-west, and at last to west, he sailed eastward, out through the sound\*, ravaging the land on both sides. He then sailed eastward along Scania, plundering the country wherever he came. When he got east to the skerries of East Gotland, he ran in and landed, and made a great blood-sacrifice. There came two ravens flying which croaked loudly ; and now, thought the earl, the blood-offering has been accepted by Odin, and he thought good luck would be with him any day he liked to go to battle. Then he set fire to his ships, landed his men, and went over all the country with armed hand. Earl Ottar, who ruled over Gotland, came against him, and they held a great battle with each other ; but Earl Hakon gained the day, and Earl Ottar and a great part of his men were killed. Earl Hakon now drove with fire and sword over both the Gotlands, until he came into Norway ; and then he proceeded by land all the way north to Drontheim. The “Vellekla” tells about this :—

\* Eyrarsund is the sound betwixt Sealand and Sweden, which is still called Ore Sound by the Norwegians.

“ On the silent battle-field,  
 In viking garb, with axe and shield,  
 The warrior, striding o’er the slain,  
 Asks of the gods ‘ What days will gain ? ’  
 Two ravens, flying from the east,  
 Come croaking to the bloody feast :  
 The warrior knows what they foreshow —  
 The days when Gotland blood will flow.  
 A viking-feast Earl Hakon kept,  
 The land with viking fury swept,  
 Harrying the land far from the shore  
 Where foray ne’er was known before.  
 Leaving the barren cold coast side,  
 He ranged through Gotland far and wide, —  
 Led many a gold-decked viking shield  
 O’er many a peaceful inland field.  
 Bodies on bodies Odin found  
 Heaped high upon each battle ground :  
 The moor, as if by witchcraft’s power,  
 Grows green, enriched by bloody shower.  
 No wonder that the gods delight  
 To give such luck in every fight  
 To Hakon’s men — for he restores  
 Their temples on our Norway shores.”

SAGA VI.

The Emperor Otto went back to his kingdom in the Saxon land, and parted in friendship with the Danish king. It is said that the Emperor Otto stood godfather to Swend, King Harald’s son, and gave him his name ; so that he was baptized Otto Swend.\* King Harald held fast by his Christianity to his dying day.

CHAPTER  
XXIX.  
The Emperor Otto  
returns  
home.

King Burislaf went to Vendland, and his son-in-law King Olaf went with him. This battle is related also by Halfred Vandrædaskald in his song on Olaf:—

“ He who through the foaming surges  
 His white-winged ocean-coursers urges,  
 Hewed from the Danes, in armour dressed,  
 The iron bark off mail-clad breast.”

Olaf Tryggvesson was three years in Vendland when Geyra his queen fell sick, and she died of her

CHAPTER  
XXX.  
Olaf’s  
journey

\* This was Swend, or Swein, afterwards the conqueror of England, and father of Canute the Great.



SAGA VI.  
from Vend-  
land.

illness. Olaf felt his loss so great, that he had no pleasure in Vendland after it. He provided himself, therefore, with war-ships, and went out again a plundering, and plundered first in Friesland, next in Saxland, and then all the way to Flanders. So says Halfred Vandrædaskald: —

“ Olaf’s broad axe of shining steel  
For the shy wolf left many a meal.  
The ill-shaped Saxon corpses lay  
Heaped up, the witch-wife’s horses’\* prey.  
She rides by night: at pools of blood,  
Where Friesland men in daylight stood,  
Her horses slake their thirst, and fly  
On to the field where Flemings lie.  
The raven-friend in Odin’s dress† —  
Olaf, who foes can well repress,  
Left Flemish flesh for many a meal  
With his broad axe of shining steel.”

CHAPTER  
XXXI.  
King Olaf  
Tryggves-  
son’s fo-  
rays.

Thereafter Olaf Tryggvesson sailed to England, and ravaged wide around in the land. He sailed all the way north to Northumberland, where he plundered; and thence to Scotland, where he marauded far and wide. Then he went to the Hebrides, where he fought some battles; and then southwards to Man, where he also fought. He ravaged far around in Ireland, and thence steered to Bretland\*, which he laid waste with fire and sword, and also the district called Cumberland. § He sailed westward from thence to Valland ||, and marauded there. When he left the west, intending to sail to England, he came to the islands called the Scilly Isles, lying westward from

\* Ravens were the witches’ horses.

† Odin’s dress is full armour.

‡ Bretland, the land of the Britons, or Wales.

§ Kumraland, or Cumberland; but one of the MSS. of Snorro’s work appears to have Kauraland, which would rather indicate Cornwall, and would correspond better with Olaf’s voyage from Wales to Valland.

|| Valland is the west coast of France, from the Seine to the Loire.

England in the ocean. Thus tells Halfred Vandræ-  
daskald of these events:—

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“The brave young king, who ne’er retreats,  
The Englishman in England beats.  
Death through Northumberland is spread  
From battleaxe and broad spear-head.  
Through Scotland with his spears he rides;  
To Man his glancing ships he guides:  
Feeding the wolves where’er he came,  
The young king drove a bloody game.  
The gallant bowman in the isles  
Slew foemen, who lay heaped in piles.  
The Irish fled at Olaf’s name—  
Fled from a young king seeking fame.  
In Bretland, and in Cumberland,  
People against him could not stand:  
Thick on the fields their corpses lay,  
To ravens and howling wolves a prey.”

Olaf Tryggvesson had been four years on this cruise, from the time he left Vendland till he came to the Scilly Islands.

While Olaf Tryggvesson lay in the Scilly Isles he heard of a seer, or fortune-teller, on the islands, who could tell beforehand things not yet done, and what he foretold many believed was really fulfilled. Olaf became curious to try this man’s gift of prophecy. He therefore sent one of his men, who was the handsomest and strongest, clothed him magnificently, and bade him say he was the king; for Olaf was known in all countries as handsomer, stronger, and braver than all others, although, after he had left Russia, he retained no more of his name than that he was called Ola, and was Russian. Now when the messenger came to the fortune-teller, and gave himself out for the king, he got the answer, “Thou art not the king, but I advise thee to be faithful to thy king.” And more he would not say to that man. The man returned, and told Olaf, and his desire to meet the fortune-teller was increased; and now he had no doubt of his being really a fortune-teller. Olaf repaired himself to him,

CHAPTER  
XXXII.  
King Olaf  
is baptized  
in the  
Scilly  
Islands.



SAGA VI.  

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and, entering into conversation, asked him if he could foresee how it would go with him with regard to his kingdom, or of any other fortune he was to have. The hermit replies in a holy spirit of prophecy, "Thou wilt become a renowned king, and do celebrated deeds. Many men wilt thou bring to faith and baptism, and both to thy own and others' good; and that thou mayst have no doubt of the truth of this answer, listen to these tokens: When thou comest to thy ships many of thy people will conspire against thee, and then a battle will follow in which many of thy men will fall, and thou wilt be wounded almost to death, and carried upon a shield to thy ship; yet after seven days thou shalt be well of thy wounds, and immediately thou shalt let thyself be baptized." Soon after Olaf went down to his ships, where he met some mutineers and people who would destroy him and his men. A fight took place, and the result was what the hermit had predicted, that Olaf was wounded, and carried upon a shield\* to his ship, and that his wound was healed in seven days. Then Olaf perceived that the man had spoken truth, — that he was a true fortune-teller, and had the gift of prophecy. Olaf went once more to the hermit, and asked particularly how he came to have such wisdom in foreseeing things to be. The hermit replied, that the Christian's God himself let him know all that he desired; and he brought before Olaf many great proofs of the power of the Almighty. In consequence of this encouragement Olaf agreed to let himself be baptized, and he and all his followers were baptized forthwith. He remained here a long time, took the true faith, and got with him priests and other learned men.

\* The shield of the Northmen appears to have been not the round, but the narrow oblong shield. We read of the men sleeping under their shields, and of being carried upon the shield when wounded. It must have been long-shaped.

In autumn Olaf sailed from Scilly to England, where he put into a harbour, but proceeded in a friendly way; for England was Christian, and he himself had become Christian. At this time a summons to a Thing went through the country, that all men should come to hold a Thing. Now when the Thing was assembled a queen called Gyda came to it, a sister of Olaf Quarar, who was king of Dublin in Ireland. She had been married to a great earl in England, and after his death she was at the head of his dominions. In her territory there was a man called Alfin, who was a great champion and single-combat man. He had paid his addresses to her; but she gave for answer, that she herself would choose whom of the men in her dominions she would take in marriage; and on that account the Thing was assembled, that she might choose a husband. Alfin came there dressed out in his best clothes, and there were many well-dressed men at the meeting. Olaf had come there also; but had on his bad-weather clothes, and a coarse over-garment, and stood with his people apart from the rest of the crowd. Gyda went round and looked at each, to see if any appeared to her a suitable man. Now when she came to where Olaf stood she looked at him straight in the face, and asked "what sort of man he was?"

He said, "I am called Ola; and I am a stranger here."

Gyda replies, "Wilt thou have me if I choose thee?"

"I will not say no to that," answered he; and he asked what her name was, and her family, and descent.

"I am called Gyda," said she; "and am daughter of the king of Ireland, and was married in this country to an earl who ruled over this territory. Since his death I have ruled over it, and many have courted

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CHAPTER  
XXXIII.  
Olaf mar-  
ries Gyda.



## SAGA VI.

me, but none to whom I would choose to be married."

She was a young and handsome woman. They afterwards talked over the matter together, and agreed, and Olaf and Gyda were betrothed.

CHAPTER  
XXXIV.  
King Olaf  
and Alfin's  
duel.

Alfin was very ill pleased with this. It was the custom then in England, if two strove for any thing, to settle the matter by single combat\*; and now Alfin challenges Olaf Tryggvesson to fight about this business. The time and place for the combat were settled, and that each should have twelve men with him. When they met, Olaf told his men to do exactly as they saw him do. He had a large axe; and when Alfin was going to cut at him with his sword he hewed away the sword out of his hand, and with the next blow struck down Alfin himself. He then bound him fast. It went in the same way with all Alfin's men. They were beaten down, bound, and carried to Olaf's lodging. Thereupon he ordered Alfin to quit the country, and never appear in it again; and Olaf took all his property. Olaf in this way got Gyda in marriage, and lived sometimes in England, and sometimes in Ireland.

CHAPTER  
XXXV.  
King Olaf  
gets his  
dog Vige.

While Olaf was in Ireland he was once on an expedition which went by sea. As they required to make a foray for provisions on the coast, some of his men landed, and drove down a large herd of cattle to the strand. Now a peasant came up, and entreated Olaf to give him back the cows that belonged to him. Olaf told him to take his cows, if he could distinguish them; "but don't delay our march." The peasant had with him a large house-dog, which he put in among the herd of cattle, in which many hundred head of beasts were driven together. The dog ran into the herd, and drove out exactly the number

\* Holm-gang; so called because the combatants went to a holm or uninhabited isle to fight in Norway.

which the peasant had said he wanted; and all were marked with the same mark, which showed that the dog knew the right beasts, and was very sagacious. Olaf then asked the peasant if he would sell him the dog. "I would rather give him to you," said the peasant. Olaf immediately presented him with a gold ring in return, and promised him his friendship in future. This dog was called Vige, and was the very best of dogs, and Olaf owned him long afterwards.

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The Danish king, Harald Gormson, heard that Earl Hakon had thrown off Christianity, and had plundered far and wide in the Danish land. The Danish king levied an army, with which he went to Norway; and when he came to the country which Earl Hakon had to rule over he laid waste the whole land, and came with his fleet to some islands called Solen Isles. Only five houses were left standing in Lerdal; but all the people fled up to the Fielde, and into the forest, taking with them all the moveable goods they could carry with them. Then the Danish king proposed to sail with his fleet to Iceland, to avenge the mockery and scorn all the Icelanders had shown towards him; for they had made a law in Iceland, that they should make as many lampoons against the Danish king as there were headlands in his country; and the reason was, because a vessel which belonged to certain Icelanders was stranded in Denmark, and the Danes took all the property, and called it wreck. One of the king's bailiffs called Birgir was to blame for this; but the lampoons were made against both. In the lampoons were the following lines:—

CHAPTER  
XXXVI.  
Of King  
Harald  
Gormson,  
and his ex-  
pedition  
against  
Iceland.

"The gallant Harald in the field  
Between his legs lets drop his shield;  
Into a pony he was changed,  
And kicked his shield, and safely ranged.  
And Birgir, he who dwells in halls  
For safety built with four stone walls,



## SAGA VI.

That these might be a worthy pair,  
Was changed into a pony mare."

CHAPTER  
XXXVII.  
King Harald sends  
a warlock  
in a trans-  
formed  
shape to  
Iceland.

King Harald told a warlock to hie to Iceland in some altered shape, and to try what he could learn there to tell him: and he set out in the shape of a whale.\* And when he came near to the land he went to the west side of Iceland, north around the land, where he saw all the mountains and hills full of land-serpents, some great, some small. When he came to Vapnafiord he went in towards the land, intending to go on shore; but a huge dragon rushed down the dale against him with a train of serpents, paddocks, and toads, that blew poison towards him. Then he turned to go westward around the land as far as Eyafiord, and he went into the fiord. Then a bird flew against him, which was so great that its wings stretched over the mountains on either side of the fiord, and many birds, great and small, with it. Then he swam farther west, and then south into Breidafiord. When he came into the fiord a large grey bull ran against him, wading into the sea, and bellowing fearfully, and he was followed by a crowd of land-serpents. From thence he went round by Reikaness, and wanted to land at Vikarsted, but there came down a hill-giant against him with an iron staff in his hands. He was a head higher than the mountains, and many other giants followed him. He then swam eastward along the land, and there was nothing to see, he said, but sand and vast deserts, and, without the skerries, high-breaking surf; and the ocean between the countries was so wide that a long-ship could not cross it. At that time Brodhelge dwelt in Vapnafiord, Eyolf Valgerdson in Eyafiord, Thord Gellir in Breidafiord, and Thorard Gode in Olfus.

\* It is probable that all this chapter is intended for satire on people in the different localities of Iceland mentioned; but we have not the clew to the wit.

Then the Danish king turned about with his fleet, and sailed back to Denmark.

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Hakon the earl settled habitations again in the country that had been laid waste, and paid no scatt as long as he lived to Denmark.

Swend, King Harald's son, who afterwards was called Tweskiæg (forked beard), asked his father King Harald for a part of his kingdom; but now, as before, Harald would not listen to dividing the Danish dominions, and giving him a kingdom. Swend collected ships of war, and gave out that he was going on a viking cruise; but when all his men were assembled, and the Jomsburg viking Palnatoke had come to his assistance, he ran into Sealand to Isefiord, where his father had been for some time with his ships ready to proceed on an expedition. Swend instantly gave battle, and the combat was severe. So many people flew to assist King Harald, that Swend was overpowered by numbers, and fled. But King Harald received a wound which ended in his death: and Swend was chosen King of Denmark. At this time Sigvald was earl over Jomsburg in Vendland. He was a son of King Strut-Harald, who had ruled over Scania. Heming, and Thorkel the Tall, were Sigvald's brothers. Bue the Thick from Bornholm, and Sigurd his brother, were also chiefs among the Jomsburg vikings: and also Vagn, a son of Aake and Thorgunna, and a sister's son of Bue and Sigurd. Earl Sigvald had taken King Swend prisoner, and carried him to Vendland, to Jomsburg, where he had forced him to make peace with Burislaf, the king of the Vends, and to take him as the peace-maker between them. Earl Sigvald was married to Astrid, a daughter of King Burislaf; and told King Swend that if he did not accept of his terms, he would deliver him into the hands of the Vends. The king knew that they would torture him to death,

CHAPTER  
XXXVIII.  
Harald  
Gormson's  
death.



## SAGA VI.

and therefore agreed to accept the earl's mediation. The earl delivered this judgment between them—that King Swend should marry Gunhild, King Burislaf's daughter; and King Burislaf again Thyre, a daughter of Harald, and King Swend's sister; but that each party should retain their own dominions, and there should be peace between the countries. Then King Swend returned home to Denmark with his wife Gunhild. Their sons were Harald and Knud (Canute) the Great. At that time the Danes threatened much to bring an army into Norway against Earl Hakon.

CHAPTER  
XXXIX.  
The solemn  
vow of the  
Jomsburg  
vikings.

King Swend made a magnificent feast, to which he invited all the chiefs in his dominions; for he would give the succession-feast, or the heirship-ale, after his father Harald. A short time before, Strut-Harald in Scania, and Vesete in Bornholm, father to Bue the Thick and to Sigurd, had died; and King Swend sent word to the Jomsburg vikings that Earl Sigvald, and Bue, and their brothers, should come to him, and drink the funeral-ale for their fathers in the same feast the king was giving. The Jomsburg vikings came to the festival with their bravest men, eleven ships of them from Vendland, and twenty ships from Scania. Great was the multitude of people assembled. The first day of the feast, before King Swend went up into his father's high seat, he drank the bowl to his father's memory, and made the solemn vow, that before three winters were past he would go over with his army to England, and either kill King Adalred (Ethelred), or chase him out of the country. This heirship bowl all who were at the feast drank. Thereafter for the chiefs of the Jomsburg vikings was filled and drunk the largest horn to be found, and of the strongest drink. When that bowl was emptied, all men drank Christ's health; and again the fullest measure and the strongest drink were handed to the Jomsburg vikings. The third bowl was to the

memory of Saint Michael, which was drunk by all. Thereafter Earl Sigvald emptied a remembrance bowl to his father's honour, and made the solemn vow, that before three winters came to an end he would go to Norway, and either kill Earl Hakon, or chase him out of the country. Thereupon Thorkel the Tall, his brother, made a solemn vow to follow his brother Sigvald to Norway, and not flinch from the battle so long as Sigvald would fight there. Then Bue the Thick vowed to follow them to Norway, and not flinch so long as the other Jomsburg vikings fought. At last Vagn Aakeson vowed that he would go with them to Norway, and not return until he had slain Thorkeld Leire, and gone to bed to his daughter Ingebord without her friends' consent. Many other chiefs made solemn vows about different things. Thus was the heirship-ale drunk that day; but the next morning, when the Jomsburg vikings had slept off their drink, they thought they had spoken more than enough. They held a meeting to consult how they should proceed with their undertaking, and they determined to fit out as speedily as possible for the expedition; and without delay ships and men-at-arms were prepared, and the news spread quickly.

When Earl Eric, the son of Hakon, who at that time was in Raumarige, heard the tidings, he immediately gathered troops, and went to the Uplands, and thence over the Fielde to Drontheim, and joined his father Earl Hakon. Thord Kolbeinson speaks of this in the lay of Eric:—

CHAPTER  
XL.  
Earl Eric  
and Earl  
Hakon  
prepare a  
war levy.

“ News from the south are flying round ;  
The bonder comes with look profound,  
Bad news of bloody battles bringing,  
Of steel-clad men, of weapons ringing.  
I hear that in the Danish land  
Long-sided ships slide down the strand,  
And, floating with the rising tide,  
The ocean-coursers soon will ride.”



## SAGA VI.

The earls Hakon and Eric had war-arrows split up and sent round the Drontheim country ; and despatched messages to both the Möres, North Möre and South Möre, and to Raumsdal, and also north to Naumadal and Halogaland. They summond all the country to provide both men and ships. So it is said in Eric's lay :—

“ The scald must now a war-song raise, —  
 The gallant active youth must praise,  
 Who o'er the ocean's field spreads forth  
 Ships, cutters, boats, from the far north.  
 His mighty fleet comes sailing by,—  
 From headlands many a mast we spy :  
 The people run to see them glide,  
 Mast after mast, by the coast-side.”

Earl Hakon set out immediately to the south, to Möre, to reconnoitre and gather people ; and Earl Eric gathered an army from the north to follow.

CHAPTER  
 XLI.  
 The expedition of  
 the Joms-  
 burg vik-  
 ings to  
 Norway.

The Jomsburg vikings assembled their fleet in Lymfiord, from whence they went to sea with sixty sail of vessels. When they came under the coast of Agde, they steered northwards to Rogaland with their fleet, and began to plunder when they came into the earl's territory ; and so they sailed north along the coast, plundering and burning. A man, by name Geirmund, sailed in a light boat with a few men northwards to Möre, and there he fell in with Earl Hakon, stood before his dinner table, and told the earl the tidings of an army from Denmark having come to the south end of the land. The earl asked if he had any certainty of it. Then Geirmund stretched forth one arm, from which the hand was cut off, and said, “ Here is the token that the enemy is in the land.” Then the earl questioned him particularly about this army. Geirmund says it consists of Jomsburg vikings, who have killed many people, and plundered all around. “ And hastily and hotly they pushed on,” says he, “ and I expect it will not

be long before they are upon you." On this the earl rowed into every fiord, going in along the one side of the land and out at the other, collecting men; and thus he drove along night and day. He sent spies out upon the upper ridges, and also southwards into the Fiords; and he proceeded north to meet Eric with his men. This appears from Eric's lay:—

"The earl, well skilled in war to speed  
O'er the wild wave the viking-steed,  
Now launched the high stems from the shore,  
Which death to Sigvald's vikings bore.  
Rollers beneath the ships' keels crash,  
Oar-blades loud in the grey sea splash,  
And they who give the ravens food  
Row fearless through the curling flood."

Eric hastened southwards with his forces the shortest way he could.

Earl Sigvald steered with his fleet northwards around Stad, and came to the land at Herö Island. Although the vikings fell in with the country people, the people never told the truth about what the earl was doing; and the vikings went on pillaging and laying waste. They laid to their vessels at the outer end of Had Island, landed, plundered, and drove both men and cattle down to the ships, killing all the men able to bear arms.

CHAPTER  
XLII.  
Of the  
Joinsburg  
vikings and  
their ex-  
pedition.

As they were going back to their ships, came a bonder, walking near to Bue's troop, who said to them, "Ye are not doing like true warriors, to be driving cows and calves down to the strand, while ye should be giving chase to the bear, since ye are coming near to the bear's den."

"What says the old man?" asked some. "Can he tell us any thing about Earl Hakon?"

The peasant replies, "The earl went yesterday into the Horundar fiord with one or two ships, certainly not more than three, and then he had no news about you."



## SAGA VI.

Bue ran now with his people in all haste down to the ships, leaving all the booty behind. Bue said, "Let us avail ourselves now of this news we have got of the earl, and be the first to the victory." When they came to their ships they rowed off from the land. Earl Sigvald called to them, and asked what they were about. They replied, "The earl is in the fiord;" on which Earl Sigvald with the whole fleet set off, and rowed north about the island Had.

CHAPTER  
XLIII.  
Beginning  
of the battle  
with the  
Jomsburg  
vikings.

The earls Hakon and Eric lay in Halkelswick, where all their forces were assembled. They had 150 ships, and they had heard that the Jomsburg vikings had come in from sea, and lay at the island Had; and they, in consequence, rowed out to seek them. When they reached a place called Hiörunga-vaag they met each other, and both sides drew up their ships in line for an attack. Earl Sigvald's banner was displayed in the midst of his army, and right against it Earl Hakon arranged his force for attack. Earl Sigvald himself had 20 ships, but Earl Hakon had 60. In Earl Hakon's army were these chiefs,—Thorer Hiort from Halogaland, and Styrkar from Gimsar. In the wing of the opposite array of the Jomsburg vikings was Bue the Thick, and his brother Sigurd, with 20 ships. Against him Earl Eric laid himself with 60 ships; and with him were these chiefs,—Gudbrand Huite from the Uplands, and Thorkill Leire from Viken. In the other wing of the Jomsburg vikings' array was Vagn Aakeson with 20 ships; and against him stood Swend the son of Hakon, in whose division was Skiegge of Yria at Uphaug, and Rognvald of Arvig at Stad, with 60 ships. It is told in the Eric's lay thus:—

"The bonders' ships along the coast  
Sailed on to meet the foemen's host;  
The stout earl's ships, with eagle flight,  
Rushed on the Danes in bloody fight.

The Danish ships, of court-men full,  
Were cleared of men, — and many a hull  
Was driving empty on the main,  
With the warm corpses of the slain.”

Eyvind Skaldaspiller says also in the “Haleygia-tal:”

“’Twas at the peep of day,—  
Our brave earl led the way ;  
His ocean-horses bounding —  
His war-horns loudly sounding !  
No joyful morn arose  
For Yngve Frey’s base foes : \*  
These Christian island-men  
Wished themselves home again.”

Then the fleets came together, and one of the sharpest of conflicts began. Many fell on both sides, but the most by far on Hakon’s side ; for the Jomsburg vikings fought desperately, sharply, and murderously, and shot right through the shields. So many spears were thrown against Earl Hakon that his armour was altogether split asunder, and he threw it off. So says Finn Halkelson :—

“ The ring-linked coat of strongest mail  
Could not withstand the iron hail,  
Though sewed with care and elbow bent,  
By Norna†, on its strength intent.  
The fire of battle raged round,—  
Odin’s steel shirt flew all unbound !  
The earl his ring-mail from him flung,  
Its steel rings on the wet deck rung ;  
Part of it fell into the sea,—  
A part was kept, a proof to be  
How sharp and thick the arrow-flight  
Among the sea-steeds in this fight.”

The Jomsburg vikings had larger and higher-sided ships ; and both parties fought desperately. Vagn

CHAPTER  
XLIV.  
Earl Sig-  
vald’s  
flight.

\* The Danes, being Christians, were particularly obnoxious to the heathen Norsemen and the scald.

† Norna, one of the Fates, stands here for women, whose business it was to sew the rings of iron upon the cloth which made these ring-mail coats or shirts. Some of these may be seen in the Museum of Northern Antiquities at Copenhagen. The needles, although some of them were of gold, appear to have been without eyes, and used like shoemakers’ awls.



## SAGA VI.

Aakeson laid his ship on board of Swend Earl Hakon's son's ship, and Swend allowed his ship to give way, and was on the point of flying. Then Earl Eric came up, and laid his ship alongside of Vagn, and then Vagn gave way, and the ships came to lie in the same position as before. Thereupon Eric goes to the other wing, which had gone back a little, and Bue had cut the ropes, intending to pursue them. Then Eric laid himself, board to board, alongside of Bue's ship, and there was a severe combat hand to hand. Two or three of Eric's ships then laid themselves upon Bue's single vessel. A thunder-storm came on at this moment, and such a heavy hail-storm that every hailstone weighed a pennyweight.\* The Earl Sigvald cut his cable, turned his ship round, and took flight. Vagn Aakeson called to him not to fly; but as Earl Sigvald paid no attention to what he said, Vagn threw his spear at him, and hit the man at the helm. Earl Sigvald rowed away with 35 ships, leaving 25 of his fleet behind.

CHAPTER  
XLV.  
Bue Digre  
throws  
himself  
overboard.

Then Earl Hakon laid his ship on the other side of Bue's ship, and now came heavy blows on Bue's men. Vigfus, a son of Vigaglun, took up an anvil with a sharp end, which lay upon the deck, and on which a man had welded the hilt to his sword just before, and being a very strong man cast the anvil with both hands at the head of Aslaf Holmskalle, and the end of it went into his brains. Before this no weapon could wound this Aslaf, who was Bue's foster-father, and forecastle commander, although he could wound right and left. Another man among the strongest and bravest was Haavard† Hogvande. In this attack Eric's men boarded Bue's ship, and went aft to the

\* Eyri, a piece of money (öre), equal to an ounce weight.

† This name Havard or Haavard, common among the Northmen, appears to be the English name Howard, and left by them in Northumberland and East Anglia.

quarter-deck where Bue stood. There Thorstein Midlang cut at Bue across his nose, so that the nose-piece of his helmet was cut in two, and he got a great wound; but Bue, in turn, cut at Thorstein's side, so that the sword cut the man through. Then Bue lifted up two chests full of gold, and called aloud, "Overboard all Bue's men," and threw himself overboard with his two chests. Many of his people sprang overboard with him. Some fell in the ship, for it was of no use to call for quarter. Bue's ship was cleared of people from stem to stern, and afterwards all the others, the one after the other.

Earl Eric then laid himself alongside of Vagn's ship, and there was a brave defence; but at last this ship too was cleared, and Vagn and thirty men were taken prisoners, and bound, and brought to land. Then came up Thorkel Leire, and said, "Thou madest a solemn vow, Vagn, to kill me; but now it seems more likely that I will kill thee." Vagn and his men sat all upon a log of wood together. Thorkel had an axe in his hands, with which he cut at him who sat outmost on the log. Vagn and the other prisoners were bound so that a rope was fastened on their feet, but they had their hands free. One of them said, "I will stick this fish-bone that I have in my hand into the earth, if it be so that I know any thing, after my head is cut off." His head was cut off, but the fish-bone fell from his hand. There sat also a very handsome man with long hair, who twisted his hair over his head, put out his neck, and said, "Don't make my hair bloody." A man took the hair in his hands and held it fast. Thorkel hewed with his axe; but the viking twitched his head so strongly that he who was holding his hair fell forwards, and the axe cut off both his hands, and stuck fast in the earth. Then Earl Eric came up, and asked, "Who is that handsome man?"

SAGA VI.

CHAPTER  
XLVI.  
The  
Jomsburg  
vikings  
bound to-  
gether in  
one chain.



## SAGA VI.

He replies, "I am called Sigurd, and am Bue's son. But are all the Jomsburg vikings dead?"

Eric says, "Thou art certainly Bue's son. Wilt thou now take life and peace?"

"That depends," says he, "upon who it is that offers it."

"He offers who has the power to do it — Earl Eric."

"That will I," says he, "from his hands." And now the rope was loosened from him.

Then said Thorkel Leire, "Although thou should give all these men life and peace, earl, Vagn Aakeson shall never come from this with life." And he ran at him with uplifted axe; but the viking Skarde swung himself in the rope, and let himself fall just before Thorkel's feet, so that Thorkel fell over him, and Vagn caught the axe and gave Thorkel a death-wound. Then said the earl, "Vagn, wilt thou accept life?"

"That I will," says he, "if you give it to all of us."

"Loose them from the rope," said the earl; and it was done. Eighteen were killed, and twelve got their lives.

CHAPTER  
XLVII.  
Death of  
Gissur of  
Valders.

Earl Hakon, and many with him, were sitting upon a piece of wood, and a bow-string twanged from Bue's ship, and the arrow struck Gissur from Valders, who was sitting next the earl, and was clothed splendidly. Thereupon the people went on board, and found Haavard Hogvande standing on his knees at the ship's railing, for his feet had been cut off\*, and he had a bow in his hand. When they came on board the ship Haavard asked, "Who fell by that shaft?"

They answered, "A man called Gissur."

\* This traditionary tale of a warrior fighting on his knees after his legs were cut off, appears to have been a popular idea among the Northmen, and is related by their descendants in the ballad of Chevy Chase.

“ Then my luck was less than I thought,” said he.

SAGA VI.

“ Great enough was the misfortune,” replied they; “ but thou shalt not make it greater.” And they killed him on the spot.

The dead were then ransacked, and the booty brought all together to be divided; and there were twenty-five ships of the Jomsburg vikings in the booty. So says Finn Halkelson:—

“ Many a viking’s body lay  
Dead on the deck this bloody day,  
Before they cut their sun-dried ropes,  
And in quick flight put all their hopes.  
He whom the ravens know afar  
Cleared five-and-twenty ships of war:  
A proof that in the furious fight  
None can withstand the Norsemen’s might.”

Then the army dispersed. Earl Hakon went to Drontheim, and was much displeased that Earl Eric had given quarter to Vagn Aakeson. It was said that at this battle Earl Hakon had sacrificed for victory his son, young Erling, to the gods; and instantly came the hail-storm, and the defeat and slaughter of the Jomsburg vikings.

Earl Eric went to the Uplands, and eastward by that route to his own kingdom, taking Aakeson with him. Earl Eric married Vagn to Ingebiorg, a daughter of Thorkel Leire, and gave him a good ship of war and all belonging to it, and a crew; and they parted the best of friends. Then Vagn went home south to Denmark, and became afterwards a man of great consideration, and many great people are descended from him.

Harald Grænske, as before related, was king in Westfold, and was married to Aasta, a daughter of Gudbrand Kule. One summer Harald Grænske made an expedition to the Baltic to gather property, and he came to Sweden. Olaf Swenske was king there, a son of Eric the Victorious, and Sigrid, a daughter of Skoglar Toste. Sigrid was then a widow, and had

CHAPTER  
XLVIII.  
King  
Harald  
Grænske’s  
death.



SAGA VI.  

---

many and great estates in Sweden. When she heard that her foster-brother was come to the country a short distance from her, she sent men to him to invite him to a feast. He did not neglect the invitation, but came to her with a great attendance of his followers, and was received in the most friendly way. He and the queen sat in the high seat, and drank together towards the evening, and all his men were entertained in the most hospitable manner. At night, when the king went to rest, a bed was put up for him with a hanging of fine linen around it, and with costly bed-clothes; but in the lodging-house there were few men. When the king was undressed, and had gone to bed, the queen came to him, filled a bowl herself for him to drink, and was very gay, and pressed him to drink. The king was drunk above measure, and, indeed, so were they both. Then he slept, and the queen went away, and laid herself down also. Sigrid was a woman of the greatest understanding, and too clever in many things. In the morning there was also the most excellent entertainment; but then it went on as usual when people have drunk too much, that next day they take care not to exceed. The queen was very gay, and she and the king talked of many things with each other; among other things she valued her property, and the dominions she had in Sweden, as nothing less than his kingdom and property in Norway. With that observation the king was nowise pleased; and he found no pleasure in any thing after that, but made himself ready for his journey in an ill humour. On the other hand, the queen was remarkably gay, and made him many presents, and followed him out to the road. Now Harald returned about harvest to Norway, and was at home all winter; but was very silent, and cast-down. In summer he went once more to the Baltic with his ships, and steered to Sweden. He sent a message to

Queen Sigrid that he wished to have a meeting with her, and she rode down to meet him. They talked together, and he soon brought out the proposal that she should marry him. She replied, that this was foolish talk for him, who was so well married already that he might think himself well off. Harald says, "Aasta is a good and clever woman; but she is not so well born as I am." Sigrid replies, "It may be that thou art of higher birth, but I think she is now pregnant with both your fortunes."\* They exchanged but few words more before the queen rode away. King Harald was always dull in apprehension, and prepared himself again to ride up the country to meet Queen Sigrid. Many of his people dissuaded him; but nevertheless he set off with a great attendance, and came to the house in which the queen dwelt. The same evening came another king, called Visavald, from Russia, likewise to pay his addresses to Queen Sigrid. Lodging was given to both the kings, and to all their people, in a great old room of an outbuilding, and all the furniture was of the same character; but there was no want of drink in the evening, and that so strong that all were drunk, and the watch, both inside and outside, fell fast asleep. Then Queen Sigrid ordered an attack on them in the night, both with fire and sword. The house was burnt, with all who were in it, and those who slipped out were put to the sword. Sigrid said that she would make these small kings tired of coming to court her. She was afterwards called Sigrid the Haughty.

This happened the winter after the battle of the Jomsburg vikings at Hiorunga Vaag. When Harald went up the country after Sigrid, he left Rane behind with the ships to look after the men. Now when Rane heard that Harald was cut off, he returned to

CHAPTER  
XLIX.  
Birth of  
King Olaf,  
son of King  
Harald  
Grænske.

\* This refers to Saint Olaf, Aasta's son by Harald.



## SAGA VI.

Norway the shortest way he could, and told the news. He repaired first to Aasta, and related to her all that had happened on the journey, and also on what errand Harald had visited Queen Sigrid. When Aasta got these tidings she set off directly to her father to the Uplands, who received her well; but both were enraged at the design which had been laid in Sweden, and that King Harald had intended to set her in a single condition. In summer Aasta, Gudbrand's daughter, was confined, and had a boy-child, who had water poured over him, and was called Olaf. Rane himself poured water over him, and the child was brought up at first in the house of Gudbrand and his mother Aasta.

CHAPTER  
L.  
About Earl  
Hakon.

Earl Hakon ruled over the whole outer part of Norway that lies on the sea, and had thus sixteen districts under his sway. The arrangement introduced by Harald Haarfager, that there should be an earl in each district, was afterward continued for a long time; and thus Earl Hakon had sixteen earls under him. So says the "Vellekla:"—

"Who before has ever known  
Sixteen earls subdued by one?  
Who has seen all Norway's land  
Conquered by one brave hero's hand?  
It will be long in memory held,  
How Hakon ruled by sword and shield.  
When tales at the viking's mast go round,  
His praise will every mouth resound."

While Earl Hakon ruled over Norway there were good crops in the land, and peace was well preserved in the country among the bonders. The earl, for the greater part of his lifetime, was therefore much beloved by the bonders; but it happened, in the longer course of time, that the earl became very intemperate in his intercourse with women, and even carried it so far that he made the daughters of people of consideration be carried away, and brought home

to him; and after keeping them a week or two as concubines, he sent them home. He drew upon himself the indignation of the relations of these girls; and the bonders began to murmur loudly, as the Drontheim people have the custom of doing when any thing goes against their judgment.

Earl Hakon, in the mean time, hears some whisper that to the westward, over the North sea, was a man called Ole, who was looked upon as a king. From the conversation of some people, he fell upon the suspicion that he must be of the royal race of Norway. It was, indeed, said that this Ole was from Russia; but the earl had heard that Tryggve Olafsson had had a son called Olaf, who in his infancy had gone east to Russia, and had been brought up by King Valdemar. The earl had carefully inquired about this man, and had his suspicion that he must be the same person who had now come to these western countries. The earl had a very good friend called Thorer Klakke, who had been long upon viking expeditions,—sometimes also upon merchant voyages; so that he was well acquainted all around. This Thorer Earl Hakon sends over the North sea, and told him to make a merchant voyage to Dublin, as many were in the habit of doing, and carefully to discover who this Ole was. Provided he got any certainty that he was Olaf Tryggvesson, or any other of the Norwegian royal race, then Thorer should endeavour to ensnare him by some deceit, and bring him into the earl's power.

On this Thorer sails westward to Ireland, and hears that Ole is in Dublin with his wife's father King Olaf Quaran. Thorer, who was a plausible man, immediately got acquainted with Ole; and as they often met, and had long conversations together, Ole began to inquire about news from Norway, and above all of the Upland kings and great people,—

SAGA VI.

CHAPTER  
LI.  
Thorer  
Klakke's  
journey to  
discover  
Olaf Tryg-  
gvesson.

CHAPTER  
LII.  
Olaf Tryg-  
gvesson  
comes to  
Norway.



## SAGA VI.

which of them were in life, and what dominions they now had. He asked also about Earl Hakon, and if he was much liked in the country. Thorer replies, that the earl is such a powerful man that no one dares to speak otherwise than he would like; but that comes from there being nobody else in the country to look to. "Yet, to say the truth, I know it to be the mind of many brave men, and of whole communities, that they would much rather see a king of Harald Haarfager's race come to the kingdom. But we know of no one suited for this, especially now that it is proved how vain every attack on Earl Hakon must be." As they often talked together in the same strain, Ole disclosed to Thorer his name and family, and asked him his opinion, and whether he thought the bonders would take him for their king if he were to appear in Norway. Thorer encouraged him very eagerly to the enterprise, and praised him and his talents highly. Then Olaf's inclination to go to the heritage of his ancestors became strong. Olaf sailed accordingly, accompanied by Thorer, with five ships; first to the Ebudes\*, and from thence to the Orkneys. At that time Earl Sigurd, Lodver's son, lay in Osmundswall†, in the island South Ronaldsa, with a ship of war, on his way to Caithness. Just at the same time Olaf was sailing with his fleet from the westward to the islands, and ran into the same harbour, because Pentland Firth was not to be passed at that tide. When the king was informed the earl was

\* Pinkerton proves with great learning that Hebrides is a name arising from an error in printing or transcribing, the Hebudes being the true name — the Eyböde, or island habitations. Sudreya, or South Isles, is the saga name of the Hebudes, from their situation relatively to Iceland, Færo, Orkney, and other islands under the dominion of Norway. This name is still preserved in the title of the bishop,—viz. Sodor and Man.

† Osmundswall is the name of a harbour in the island of Walls, opposite to South Ronaldsa, still used for waiting a tide favourable for crossing Pentland Firth.

there, he made him be called ; and when the earl came on board to speak with the king, after a few words only had passed between them, the king says the earl must allow himself to be baptized, and all the people of the country also, or he should be put to death directly ; and he assured the earl he would lay waste the islands with fire and sword, if the people did not adopt Christianity. In the position the earl found himself, he preferred becoming Christian, and he and all who were with him were baptized. Afterwards the earl took an oath to the king, went into his service, and gave him his son, whose name was Whelp, or Dog, as an hostage ; and the king took Whelp to Norway with him. Thereafter Olaf went out to sea to the eastward, and made the land at Möster Island, where he first touched the ground of Norway. He had high mass sung in a tent, and afterwards on the spot a church was built. Thorer Klakke said now to the king, that the best plan for him would be not to make it known who he was, or to let any report about him get abroad ; but to seek out Earl Hakon as fast as possible, and fall upon him by surprise. King Olaf did so, sailing northward day and night, when wind permitted, and did not let the people of the country know who it was that was sailing in such haste. When he came north to Agdaness\*, he heard that the earl was in the fiord, and was in discord with the bonders. On hearing this, Thorer saw that things were going in a very different way from what he expected ; for after the battle with the Jomsburg vikings all men in Norway were the most sincere friends of the earl on account of the victory he had gained, and of the peace and security he had given to the country ; and now it unfortunately turns out

\* Agdaness, the south point of the mouth of Drontheim fiord.



## SAGA VI.

CHAPTER  
LIII.  
Earl Hakon's flight.

that a great chief has come to the country at a time when the bonders are in arms against the earl.

Earl Hakon was at a feast in Melhouse in Guldal. There was a powerful bonder, by name Orm Lyrgia, who dwelt in Boness, who had a wife called Gudrun, a daughter of Bergthor of Lunde. She was called the Lunde-sun; for she was the most beautiful of women. The earl sent his slaves to Orm, with the errand that they should bring Orm's wife, Gudrun, to the earl. The thralls tell their errand, and Orm bids them first seat themselves to breakfast; but before they had done eating, many people from the neighbourhood, to whom Orm had sent notice, had gathered together: and now Orm declared he would not send Gudrun with the messengers. Gudrun told the thralls to tell the earl that she would not come to him, unless he sent Thora of Rimol after her. Thora was a woman of great influence, and one of the earl's best beloved. The thralls say that they will come another time, and both the bonder and his wife would be made to repent of it; and they departed with many threats. Orm, on the other hand, sent out a message-token to all the neighbouring country, and with it the message to attack Earl Hakon with weapons and kill him. He sent also a message to Haldor in Skirdingsted, who also sent out his message-token. A short time before, the earl had taken away the wife of a man called Bryniolf, and there had very nearly been an insurrection about that business. Having now again got this message-token, the people made a general revolt, and set out all to Melhouse. When the earl heard of this, he left the house with his followers, and concealed himself in a deep glen, now called Earl's Dale. Later in the day, the earl got news of the bonders' army. They had beset all the roads; but believed the earl had escaped to his ships, which his son Erlend, a re-

markably handsome and hopeful young man, had the command of. When night came the earl dispersed his people, and ordered them to go through the forest roads into Orkadal; "for nobody will molest you," said he, "when I am not with you. Send a message to Erlend to sail out of the fiord, and meet me in Möre. In the mean time I will conceal myself from the bonders." Then the earl went his way with one thrall or slave, called Karker, attending him. There was ice upon the river of Guldal, and the earl drove his horse upon it, and left his coat lying upon the ice. They then went to a hole, since called the Earl's Hole, where they slept. When Karker awoke he told his dream, — that a black threatening man had come into the hole, and was angry that people should have entered it; and that the man had said, "Ulle is dead." The earl said that his son Erlend must be killed. Karker slept again, and was again disturbed in his sleep; and when he awoke he told his dream, — that the same man had again appeared to him, and bade him tell the earl that all the Sounds were closed. From this dream the earl began to suspect that it betokened a short life to him. They stood up, and went to the house of Rimol. The earl now sends Karker to Thora, and begs of her to come secretly to him. She did so, and he took it very kind of her, and begged her to conceal him for a few nights until the army of the bonders had dispersed. "Here about my house," said she, "you will be hunted after, both inside and outside; for many know that I would willingly help you if I can. There is but one place about the house where they could never expect to find such a man as you, and that is the swine-stye." When they came there the earl said, "Well, let it be made ready for us; as to save our life is the first and foremost concern." The slave dug a great hole in it, bore away the earth that he dug out, and laid wood



## SAGA VI.

over it. Thora brought the tidings to the earl that Olaf Tryggvesson had come from sea into the fiord, and had killed his son Erlend. Then the earl and Karker both went in the hole. Thora covered it with wood, and threw earth and dung over it, and drove the swine upon the top of it. The swine-stye was under a great stone.

CHAPTER  
LIV.  
Erlend's  
death.

Olaf Tryggvesson came from sea into the fiord with five long-ships, and Erlend, Earl Hakon's son, rowed towards him with three ships. When the vessels came near to each other, Erlend suspected they might be enemies, and turned towards the land. When Olaf and his followers saw long-ships coming in haste out of the fiord, and rowing towards them, they thought Earl Hakon must be here; and they put out all oars to follow them. As soon as Erlend and his ships got near the land they rowed aground instantly, jumped overboard, and took to the land; but at the same instant Olaf's ship came up with them. Olaf saw a remarkably handsome man swimming in the water, and laid hold of a tiller and threw it at him. The tiller struck Erlend, the son of Hakon the earl, on the head, and clove it to the brain; and there left Erlend his life. Olaf and his people killed many; but some escaped, and some were made prisoners, and got life and freedom that they might go and tell what had happened. They learned then that the bonders had driven away Earl Hakon, and that he had fled, and his troops were all dispersed.

CHAPTER  
LV.  
Earl Ha-  
kon's death.

The bonders then met Olaf, to the joy of both, and they made an agreement together. The bonders took Olaf to be their king, and resolved, one and all, to seek out Earl Hakon. They went up Guldal; for it seemed to them likely that if the earl was concealed in any house it must be at Rimol, for Thora was his dearest friend in that valley. They come up, therefore, and search every where, outside and inside the

house, but could not find him. Then Olaf held a House Thing or council out in the yard, and stood upon a great stone which lay beside the swine-stye, and made a speech to the people, in which he promised to enrich the man with rewards and honours who should kill the earl. This speech was heard by the earl and the thrall Karker. There was a little daylight admitted to them.

“Why art thou so pale,” says the earl, “and now again black as earth? Thou hast not the intention to betray me?”

“By no means,” replies Karker.

“We were born on the same night,” says the earl, “and the time will be short between our deaths.”

King Olaf went away in the evening. When night came the earl kept himself awake; but Karker slept, and was disturbed in his sleep. The earl woke him, and asked him “what he was dreaming of?”

He answered, “I was at Lade, and Olaf Tryggvesson was laying a gold ring about my neck.”

The earl says, “It will be a red ring Olaf will lay about thy neck if he catches thee. Take care of that! From me thou shalt enjoy all that is good, therefore betray me not.”

They then kept themselves awake both; the one, as it were, watching upon the other. But towards day the earl suddenly dropped asleep; but his sleep was so unquiet that he drew his heels under him, and raised his neck, as if going to rise, and screamed dreadfully high. On this Karker, dreadfully alarmed, drew a large knife out of his belt, stuck it in the earl’s throat, and cut it across, and killed Earl Hakon. Then Karker cut off the earl’s head, and ran away. Late in the day he came to Lade, where he delivered the earl’s head to King Olaf, and told all these circumstances of his own and Earl Hakon’s doings. Olaf had him taken out and beheaded.



SAGA VI.  
 CHAPTER  
 LVI.  
 Earl Hakon's head.

King Olaf, and a vast number of bonders with him, then went out to Nidarholm\*, and had with them the heads of Earl Hakon and Karker. This holm was used then for a place of execution of thieves and ill-doers, and there stood a gallows on it. He had the heads of the earl and of Karker hung upon it, and the whole army of the bonders cast stones at them, screaming and shouting that the one worthless fellow had followed the other. They then sent up to Guldal for the earl's dead body. So great was the enmity of the Drontheim people against Earl Hakon, that no man could venture to call him by any other name than Hakon the Bad; and he was so called long after those days. Yet, sooth to say of Earl Hakon, he was in many respects fitted to be a chief: first, because he was descended from a high race; then because he had understanding and knowledge to direct a government; also manly courage in battle to gain victories, and good luck in killing his enemies. So says Thorleif Randfeldson:—

“ In Norway's land was never known  
 A braver earl than the brave Hakon.  
 At sea, beneath the clear moon's light,  
 No braver man e'er sought the fight.  
 Nine kings to Odin's wide domain  
 Were sent, by Hakon's right hand slain!  
 So well the raven-flocks were fed —  
 So well the wolves were filled with dead ! ”

Earl Hakon was very generous; but the greatest misfortunes attended even such a chief at the end of his days: and the great cause of this was that the time was come when heathen sacrifices and idolatrous worship were doomed to fall, and the holy faith and good customs to come in their place.

CHAPTER  
 LVII.  
 Olaf Tryggvesson  
 elected

Olaf Tryggvesson was chosen at Drontheim by the General Thing to be the king over the whole country, as Harald Haarfager had been. The whole public

\* Now Munkholm, opposite to the town of Drontheim.

and the people throughout all the land would listen to nothing else than that Olaf Tryggvesson should be king. Then Olaf went round the whole country, and brought it under his rule, and all the people of Norway gave in their submission; and also the chiefs in the Uplands and in Viken, who before had held their lands as fiefs from the Danish king, now became King Olaf's men, and held their lands from him. He went thus through the whole country during the first winter and the following summer. Earl Eric, the son of Earl Hakon, his brother Swend, and their friends and relations, fled out of the country, and went east to Sweden to King Olaf the Swede, who gave them a good reception. So says Thord Kolbeinsson:—

SAGA VI.  
king at a  
General  
Thing.

“O thou whom bad men drove away,  
After the bonders, by foul play,  
Took Hakon's life! Fate will pursue  
These bloody wolves, and make them rue.  
When the host came from out the West,  
Like some tall stately war-ship's mast,  
I saw the son of Tryggve stand,  
Surveying proud his native land.”

And again, —

“Eric has more upon his mind,  
Against the new Norse king designed,  
Than by his words he seems to show —  
And truly it may well be so.  
Stubborn and stiff are Drontheim men,  
But Drontheim's earl may come again;  
In Swedish land he knows no rest —  
Fierce wrath is gathering in his breast.”

Lodin was the name of a man from Viken who was rich and of good family. He went often on merchant voyages, and sometimes on viking cruises. It happened one summer that he went on a merchant voyage with much merchandise in a ship of his own. He directed his course first to Esthonia, and was there at a market in summer. To the place at which the market was held many merchant goods were brought, and also many thralls or slaves for sale.

CHAPTER  
LVIII.  
Lodin's  
marriage.



## SAGA VI.

There Lodin saw a woman who was to be sold as a slave; and on looking at her he knew her to be Astrid, Eric's daughter, who had been married to King Tryggve. But now she was altogether unlike what she had been when he last saw her; for now she was pale, meagre in countenance, and ill clad. He went up to her, and asked her how matters stood with her. She replied, "It is heavy to be told; for I have been sold as a slave, and now again I am brought here for sale." After speaking together a little Astrid knew him, and begged him to buy her, and bring her home to her friends. "On this condition," said he, "I will bring thee home to Norway,—that thou wilt marry me." Now as Astrid stood in great need, and moreover knew that Lodin was a man of high birth, rich, and brave, she promised to do so for her ransom. Lodin accordingly bought Astrid, took her home to Norway with him, and married her with her friends' consent. Their children were Thorkel Nefia, Ingerid, and Ingegird. Ingeborg and Astrid were daughters of Astrid by King Tryggve. Eric Biodaskalle's sons were Sigurd Karlshoved, Jostein, and Thorkel Dydnil, who were all rich and brave people who had estates east in the country. In Viken, in the east, dwelt two brothers, rich and of good descent; one called Thorgeir, and the other Hyrning; and they married Lodin and Astrid's daughters, Ingerid and Ingegird.

CHAPTER  
LIX.  
King Olaf  
baptizes the  
country of  
Viken.

When Harald Gormson, king of Denmark, had adopted Christianity, he sent a message over all his kingdom that all people should be baptized, and converted to the true faith. He himself followed his message, and used power and violence where nothing else would do. He sent two earls, Urguthriot and Brimilskior, with many people to Norway, to proclaim Christianity there. In Viken, which stood directly under the king's power, this succeeded, and many were baptized of the country folk. But when Swend

Forked-beard, immediately after his father King Harald's death, went out on war expeditions in Saxonland, Friesland, and at last in England, the Northmen who had taken up Christianity returned back to heathen sacrifices, just as before; and the people in the north of the country did the same. But now that Olaf Tryggvesson was king of Norway, he remained long during the summer in Viken, where many of his relatives and some of his brothers-in-law were settled, and also many who had been great friends of his father; so that he was received with the greatest affection. Olaf called together his mother's brothers, his stepfather Lodin, and his brothers-in-law Thorgeir and Hyrning, to speak with them, and to disclose with the greatest care the business which he desired they themselves should approve of, and support with all their power; namely, the proclaiming Christianity over all his kingdom. He would, he declared, either bring it to this, that all Norway should be Christian, or die. "I shall make you all," said he, "great and mighty men in promoting this work; for I trust to you most, as blood relations or brothers-in-law." All agreed to do what he asked, and to follow him in what he desired. King Olaf immediately made it known to the public that he recommended Christianity to all the people in his kingdom, which message was well received and approved of by those who had before given him their promise; and these being the most powerful among the people assembled, the others followed their example, and all the inhabitants of the east part of Viken allowed themselves to be baptized. The king then went to the north part of Viken, and invited every man to accept Christianity; and those who opposed him he punished severely, killing some, mutilating others, and driving some into banishment. At length he brought it so far, that all the kingdom which his father King Tryggve had ruled over, and



## SAGA VI.

also that of his relation Harald Grænske, accepted of Christianity; and during that summer and the following winter all Viken was made Christian.

CHAPTER  
LX.  
Of the  
Hordaland  
people.

Early in spring King Olaf set out from Viken with a great force northwards to Agder, and proclaimed that every man should be baptized. And thus the people received Christianity, for nobody dared oppose the king's will, wheresoever he came. In Hordaland, however, were many bold and great men of Horde-Kaari's race. He, namely, had left four sons,—the first Thorleif Spaake; the second, Ogmund father of Thorolf Skialg, who was father of Erling of Sole; the third was Thord, father of the Herse Klyp who killed King Sleve Gunhild's son; and lastly, Olmod father of Askel, whose son was Aslak Fitiaskalle; and that family branch was the greatest and most considered in Hordaland. Now when this family heard the bad tidings, that the king was coming along the country from the eastward with a great force, and was breaking the ancient law of the people, and imposing punishment and hard conditions on all who opposed him, the relatives appointed a meeting to take counsel with each other, for they knew the king would come down upon them at once; and they all resolved to appear in force at the Gula Thing, there to hold a conference with King Olaf Tryggvesson.

CHAPTER  
LXI.  
Rogaland  
baptized.

When King Olaf came to Rogaland, he immediately summoned the people to a Thing; and when the bonders received the message-token for a Thing, they assembled in great numbers well armed. After they had come together, they resolved to choose three men, the best speakers of the whole, who should answer King Olaf, and argue with the king; and especially should decline to accept of any thing against the old law, even if the king should require it of them. Now when the bonders came to the Thing, and the Thing was formed, King Olaf arose, and at first spoke good-humouredly to the people; but they observed

he wanted them to accept Christianity, with all his fine words: and in the conclusion he let them know that those who should speak against him, and not submit to his proposal, must expect his displeasure and punishment, and all the ill that it was in his power to inflict. When he had ended his speech, one of the bonders stood up, who was considered the most eloquent, and who had been chosen as the first who should reply to King Olaf. But when he would begin to speak such a cough seized him, and such a difficulty of breathing, that he could not bring out a word, and had to sit down again. Then another bonder stood up, resolved not to let an answer be wanting, although it had gone so ill with the former; but he became so confused that he could not find a word to say, and all present set up a laughter, amid which the bonder sat down again. And now the third stood up to make a speech against King Olaf's; but when he began he became so hoarse and husky in his throat, that nobody could hear a word he said, and he also had to sit down. There was none of the bonders now to speak against the king, and as nobody answered him there was no opposition; and it came to this, that all agreed to what the king had proposed. All the people of the Thing accordingly were baptized before the Thing was dissolved.

King Olaf went with his men-at-arms to the Gula Thing; for the bonders had sent him word that they would reply there to his speech. When both parties had come to the Thing, the king desired first to have a conference with the chief people of the country; and when the meeting was numerous the king set forth his errand, — that he desired them, according to his proposal, to allow themselves to be baptized. Then said Olmod the Old, “We relations have considered together this matter, and have come to one resolution. If thou thinkest, king, to force us who are related

CHAPTER  
LXII.  
Erling  
Skialgs-  
son's  
wooing.



## SAGA VI.

together to such things as to break our old law, or to bring us under thyself by any sort of violence, then will we stand against thee with all our might: and be the victory to him to whom fate ordains it. But if thou, king, wilt advance our relations' fortunes, then thou shalt have leave to do as thou desirest, and we will all serve thee with zeal in thy purpose."

The king replies, "What do ye propose for obtaining this agreement?"

Then answers Olmod, "The first is, that thou wilt give thy sister Astrid in marriage to Erling Skialgsson, our relation, whom we look upon as the most hopeful young man in all Norway."

King Olaf replied, that this marriage appeared to him also very suitable; "as Erling is a man of good birth, and a good-looking man in appearance: but Astrid herself must answer to this proposal."

Thereupon the king spoke to his sister. She said, "It is but of little use that I am a king's sister, and a king's daughter, if I must marry a man who has no high dignity or office. I will rather wait a few years for a better match."

CHAPTER  
LXIII.  
Hordaland  
baptized.

King Olaf took a falcon that belonged to Astrid, plucked off all its feathers, and then sent it to her. Then said Astrid, "Angry is my brother." And she stood up, and went to the king, who received her kindly; and she said, that she left it to the king to determine her marriage. "I think," said the king, "that I must have power enough in this land to raise any man I please to high dignity." Then the king ordered Olmod and Erling to be called to a conference, and all their relations; and the marriage was determined upon, and Astrid betrothed to Erling. Thereafter the king held the Thing, and recommended Christianity to the bonders; and as Olmod, and Erling, and all their relations, took upon themselves the most active part in forwarding the king's desire, nobody

dared to speak against it ; and all the people were baptized, and adopted Christianity. SAGA VI.

Erling Skialgsson held his wedding in summer, and a great many people were assembled at it. King Olaf was also there, and offered Erling an earldom. Erling replied thus : “ All my relations have been hersers only, and I will take no higher title than they have ; but this I will accept from thee, king, that thou makest me the greatest of that title in the country.” The king consented ; and at his departure the king invested his brother-in-law Erling with all the land north of the Sogn fiord, and east to the Lidandisness\*, on the same terms as Harald Haarfager had given land to his sons, as before related. CHAPTER  
LXIV.  
Erling  
Skialgs-  
son's wed-  
ding.

The same harvest King Olaf summoned the bonders to a Thing of the four districts at Drogseid, in Stad ; and there the people from Sogn, the Fiord district, South Möre, and Raumsdal, were summoned to meet. King Olaf came there with a great many people who had followed him from the eastward, and also with those who had joined him from Rogaland and Hordaland. When the king came to the Thing, he proposed to them there, as elsewhere, Christianity ; and as the king had such a powerful host with him, they were frightened. The king offered them two conditions, — either to accept Christianity, or to fight. But the bonders saw they were in no condition to fight the king, and resolved, therefore, that all the people should agree to be baptized. The king proceeded afterwards to North Möre, and baptized all that district. He then sailed to Lade, in Drontheim ; had the temple there rased to the ground ; took all the ornaments and all property out of the temple, and from the gods in it ; and among other things the great gold ring which CHAPTER  
LXV.  
Districts of  
Ram  
and the  
Fiords  
baptized.

\* The Naze of Norway is called Lindisness and Lidandisness in the saga.



## SAGA VI.

Earl Hakon had ordered to be made, and which hung in the door of the temple; and then had the temple burnt. But when the bonders heard of this, they sent out a war-arrow as a token through the whole district, ordering out a warlike force, and intended to meet the king with it. In the mean time King Olaf sailed with a war-force out of the Fiord along the coast northward, intending to proceed to Halogaland, and baptize there. When he came north to the Bear Islands, he heard from Halogaland that a force was assembled there to defend the country against the king. The chiefs of this force were Harek of Thiotto, Thorer Hiort from Vaage, and Eyvind Kinnreif. Now when King Olaf heard this, he turned about and sailed southwards along the land; and when he got south of Stad proceeded at his leisure, and came early in winter all the way east to Viken.

CHAPTER  
LXVI.  
King Olaf  
proposes  
marriage  
to Queen  
Sigrid the  
Haughty.

Queen Sigrid in Sweden, who had for surname the Haughty, sat in her mansion, and during the same winter messengers went between King Olaf and Sigrid to propose his courtship to her, and she had no objection; and the matter was fully and fast resolved upon. Thereupon King Olaf sent to Queen Sigrid the great gold ring he had taken from the temple door of Lade, which was considered a distinguished ornament. The meeting for concluding the business was appointed to be in spring on the frontier, at the Gotha river. Now the ring which King Olaf had sent Queen Sigrid was highly prized by all men; yet the queen's goldsmiths, two brothers, who took the ring in their hands, and weighed it, spoke quietly to each other about it, and in a manner that made the queen call them to her, and ask "what they smiled at?" But they would not say a word, and she commanded them to say what it was they had discovered. Then they said the ring is false. Upon this she ordered the ring to be broken in pieces, and it was found to be copper inside. Then

the queen was enraged, and said that Olaf would deceive her in more ways than this one. In the same year King Olaf went into Ringarike, and there the people also were baptized.

SAGA VI.

Aasta, the daughter of Gudbrand, soon after the fall of Harald Grænske married again a man who was called Sigurd Syr, who was a king in Ringarike. Sigurd was a son of Halfdan, and grandson of Sigurd Rise, who was a son of Harald Haarfager. Olaf, the son of Aasta and Harald Grænske, lived with Aasta, and was brought up from childhood in the house of his stepfather, Sigurd Syr. Now when King Olaf Trygvesson came to Ringarike to spread Christianity, Sigurd Syr and his wife allowed themselves to be baptized, along with Olaf her son; and Olaf Trygvesson was godfather to Olaf, the stepson of Harald Grænske. Olaf was then three years old. King Olaf returned from thence to Viken, where he remained all winter. He had now been three years king in Norway.

CHAPTER  
LXVII.  
Olaf Ha-  
raldsson  
baptized.

Early in spring King Olaf went eastwards to Konghelle to the meeting with Queen Sigrid; and when they met the business was considered about which the winter before they had held communication, namely, their marriage; and the business seemed likely to be concluded. But when Olaf insisted that Sigrid should let herself be baptized, she answered thus:—"I must not part from the faith which I have held, and my forefathers before me; and, on the other hand, I shall make no objection to your believing in the god that pleases you best." Then King Olaf was enraged, and answered in a passion, "Why should I care to have thee, an old faded woman, and a heathen jade?" and therewith struck her in the face with his glove which he held in his hands, rose up, and they parted. Sigrid said, "This may some day be thy death." The king set off to Viken, the queen to Sweden.

CHAPTER  
LXVIII.  
Meeting  
of King  
Olaf and  
Sigrid the  
Haughty at  
Konghelle.



## SAGA VI.

CHAPTER  
LXIX.  
The burning of warlocks.

Then the king proceeded to Viken, and held a Thing, at which he declared in a speech that all the men of whom it should be known to a certainty that they dealt with evil spirits, or in witchcraft, or were sorcerers, should be banished forth of the land. Thereafter the king had all the neighbourhood ransacked after such people, and called them all before him; and when they were brought to the Thing there was a man among them called Eyvind Kellda, a grandson of Rognvald Rettilbein, Harald Haarfager's son. Eyvind was a sorcerer, and particularly knowing in witchcraft. The king let all these men be seated in one room, which was well adorned, and made a great feast for them, and gave them strong drink in plenty. Now when they were all very drunk, he ordered the house to be set on fire, and it and all the people within it were consumed, all but Eyvind Kellda, who contrived to escape by the smoke-hole in the roof. And when he had got a long way off, he met some people on the road going to the king, and he told them to tell the king that Eyvind Kellda had slipped away from the fire, and would never come again in King Olaf's power, but would carry on his arts of witchcraft as much as ever. When the people came to the king with such a message from Eyvind, the king was ill pleased that Eyvind had escaped death.

CHAPTER  
LXX.  
Eyvind Kellda's death.

When spring came King Olaf went out to Viken, and was on visits to his great farms. He sent notice over all Viken that he would call out an army in summer, and proceed to the north parts of the country. Then he went north to Agder; and when Easter was approaching he took the road to Rogaland with 300 men, and came on Easter evening north to Augvaldsness, in Kormt Island, where an Easter feast was prepared for him. That same night came Eyvind Kellda to the island with a well-manned long-ship, of which the whole crew consisted of sor-

cerers, and other dealers with evil spirits. Eyvind went from his ship to the land with his followers, and there they played many of their pranks of witchcraft. Eyvind clothed them with caps of darkness, and so thick a mist that the king and his men could see nothing of them; but when they came near to the house of Augvaldsness, it became clear day. Then it went differently from what Eyvind had intended; for now there came just such a darkness over him and his comrades in witchcraft as they had made before, so that they could see no more from their eyes than from the back of their heads, but went round and round in a circle upon the island. When the king's watchmen saw them going about, without knowing what people these were, they told the king. Thereupon he rose up with his people, put on his clothes, and when he saw Eyvind with his men wandering about he ordered his men to arm, and examine what folk these were. The king's men discovered it was Eyvind, took him and all his company prisoners, and brought them to the king. Eyvind now told all he had done on his journey. Then the king ordered them all to be taken out to a skerry which was under water in flood tide, and there to be left bound. Eyvind and all with him left their lives on this rock, and the skerry is still called the Skerry of Shrieks.

It is related that once on a time King Olaf was at a feast at this Augvaldsness, and one eventide there came to him an old man very gifted in words, and with a broad-brimmed hat upon his head. He was one-eyed, and had something to tell of every land. He entered into conversation with the king; and as the king found much pleasure in the guest's speech, he asked him concerning many things, to which the guest gave good answers: and the king sat up late in the evening. Among other things, the king asked

CHAPTER  
LXXI.  
Of King  
Olaf and  
Odin's ap-  
parition.



## SAGA VI.

him if he knew who the Augvald had been who had given his name both to the ness and to the house. The guest replied, that this Augvald was a king, and a very valiant man, and that he made great sacrifices to a cow which he had with him wherever he went, and considered it good for his health to drink her milk. This same King Augvald had a battle with a king called Varin, in which battle Augvald fell. He was buried under a mound close to the house; "and there stands his stone over him, and close to it his cow also is laid." Such and many other things, and ancient events, the king inquired after. Now, when the king had sat late into the night, the bishop reminded him that it was time to go to bed, and the king did so. But after the king was undressed, and had laid himself in bed, the guest sat upon the footstool before the bed, and still spoke long with the king; for after one tale was ended, he still wanted a new one. Then the bishop observed to the king, it was time to go to sleep, and the king did so; and the guest went out. Soon after the king awoke, asked for the guest, and ordered him to be called; but the guest was not to be found. The morning after, the king ordered his cook and cellar-master to be called, and asked if any strange person had been with them. They said, that as they were making ready the meat a man came to them, and observed that they were cooking very poor meat for the king's table; whereupon he gave them two thick and fat pieces of beef, which they boiled with the rest of the meat. Then the king ordered that all the meat should be thrown away, and said this man can be no other than the Odin whom the heathen have so long worshipped; and added, "but Odin shall not deceive us."

King Olaf collected a great army in the east of the country towards summer, and sailed with it north to Nidaros in the Drontheim country. From thence he

sent a message-token over all the fiord, calling the people of eight different districts to a Thing; but the bonders changed the Thing-token into a war-token, and called together all men, free and unfree\*, in all the Drontheim land. Now when the king met the Thing, the whole people came fully armed. After the Thing was seated, the king spoke, and invited them to adopt Christianity; but he had only spoken a short time when the bonders called out to him to be silent, or they would attack him and drive him away. "We did so," said they, "with Hakon foster-son of Athelstan, when he brought us the same message, and we held him in quite as much respect as we hold thee." When King Olaf saw how incensed the bonders were, and that they had such a war force that he could make no resistance, he turned his speech as if he would give way to the bonders, and said, "I wish only to be in a good understanding with you as of old; and I will come to where ye hold your greatest sacrifice-festival, and see your customs, and thereafter we shall consider which to hold by." And in this all agreed; and as the king spoke mildly and friendly with the bonders, their anger was appeased, and their conference with the king went off peacefully. At the close of it a midsummer sacrifice was fixed to take place in Mære†, and all chiefs and great bonders were to attend it as usual. The king was to be at it.

\* "Thegn oc Thrael" is the expression in the Icelandic text; and the term Thegn or Thane occurs rarely, if at all, in any other passage of the early sagas. Bonde, it is evident, was a word applied only to landowners; and to this general meeting all men of the highest and of the lowest class, and not merely the men having right as bonders to sit in the Law Things, were summoned by the bonders. Thegn has been a more comprehensive term than Bonde, and means here a free proprietor of any kind of property. The bonders or landed proprietors only are spoken of at Law Things, and no mention of thegns is made at Things, or on any other occasion.

† At Mære, the site of the ancient temple in the Drontheim district, a large mound still remains with the name Mære.



## SAGA VI.

CHAPTER  
LXXIII.  
Of  
Skiægge,  
or Iron  
Beard.

There was a great bonder called Skiægge, and sometimes Iron Skiægge, or Iron Beard, who dwelt in Ophaug in Yriar. He spoke first at the Thing to Olaf; and was the foremost man of the bonders in speaking against Christianity. The Thing was concluded in this way for that time,—the bonders returned home, and the king went to Lade.

CHAPTER  
LXXIV.  
The feast  
at Lade.

King Olaf lay with his ships in the river Nid, and had thirty vessels, which were manned with many brave people; but the king himself was often at Lade with his court attendants. As the time now was approaching at which the sacrifices should be made at Mære, the king prepared a great feast at Lade, and sent a message to the districts of Strind, Guladal, and out to Orkadal, to invite the chiefs and other great bonders. When the feast was ready, and the chiefs assembled, there was a handsome entertainment the first evening, at which plenty of liquor went round, and the guests were made very drunk. The night after they all slept in peace. The following morning, when the king was dressed, he had the early mass sung before him; and when the mass was over, ordered to sound the trumpets for a House Thing: upon which all his men left the ships to come up to the Thing. When the Thing was seated, the king stood up, and spoke thus:—"We held a Thing at Froste, and there I invited the bonders to allow themselves to be baptized; but they, on the other hand, invited me to offer sacrifice to their gods, as King Hakon, Athelstan's foster-son, had done; and thereafter it was agreed upon between us that we should meet at Mære, and there make a great sacrifice. Now if I, along with you, shall turn again to making sacrifice, then will I make the greatest of sacrifices that are in use; and I will sacrifice men. But I will not select slaves or malefactors for this, but will take the greatest men only to be offered

to the gods; and for this I select Orm Lyrgia of Medalhouse, Styrkar of Gimsar, Kaare of Gryting, Asbiorn Thorbergson of Varness, Orm of Lyra, Hal-dor of Skirdingstedia;" and besides these he named five others of the principal men. All these, he said, he would offer in sacrifice to the gods for peace and a fruitful season; and ordered them to be laid hold of immediately. Now when the bonders saw that they were not strong enough to make head against the king, they asked for peace, and submitted wholly to the king's pleasure. So it was settled that all the bonders who had come there should be baptized, and should take an oath to the king to hold by the right faith, and to renounce sacrifice to the gods. The king then kept all these men as hostages who came to his feast, until they sent him their sons, brothers, or other near relations.

King Olaf went in with all his forces into the Drontheim country; and when he came to Mære all among the chiefs of the Drontheim people who were most opposed to Christianity were assembled, and had with them all the great bonders who had before made sacrifice at that place. There was thus a greater multitude of bonders than there had been at the Froste Thing. Now the king let the people be summoned to the Thing, where both parties met armed; and when the Thing was seated the king made a speech, in which he told the people to go over to Christianity. Jernskiægge replies on the part of bonders, and says that the will of the bonders is now, as formerly, that the king should not break their laws. "We want, king," said he, "that thou shouldst offer sacrifice, as other kings before thee have done." All the bonders applauded his speech with a loud shout, and said they would have all things according to what Skiægge said. Then the king said he would go into the temple of their gods with them, and see

CHAPTER  
LXXV.  
Of the  
Thing in  
Drontheim.



## SAGA VI.

what the practices were when they sacrificed. The bonders thought well of this proceeding, and both parties went to the temple.

CHAPTER  
LXXVI.  
The Dron-  
theim  
people bap-  
tized.

Now King Olaf entered into the temple with some few of his men and a few bonders; and when the king came to where their gods were, Thor, as the most considered among their gods, sat there adorned with gold and silver. The king lifted up his gold-inlaid axe which he carried in his hands, and struck Thor so that the image rolled down from its seat. Then the king's men turned to and threw down all the gods from their seats; and while the king was in the temple, Jernskiægge was killed outside of the temple doors, and the king's men did it. When the king came forth out of the temple he offered the bonders two conditions,—that all should accept of Christianity forthwith, or that they should fight with him. But as Skiægge was killed, there was no leader in the bonders' army to raise the banner against King Olaf; so they took the other condition, to surrender to the king's will and obey his order. Then King Olaf had all the people present baptized, and took hostages from them for their remaining true to Christianity; and he sent his men round to every district, and no man in the Drontheim country opposed Christianity, but all people took baptism.

CHAPTER  
LXXVII.  
Of the  
building of  
the town  
in the  
Drontheim  
country.

King Olaf with his people went out to Nidaros, and made houses on the flat side of the river Nid, which he raised to be a merchant town, and gave people ground to build houses upon. The king's house he had built just opposite the ships' creek; and he transported to it, in harvest, all that was necessary for his winter residence, and had many people about him there.

CHAPTER  
LXXVIII.  
King Olaf's  
marriage.

King Olaf appointed a meeting with the relations of Jernskiægge, and offered them the compensation or penalty for his bloodshed; for there were many

bold men who had an interest in that business. Jernskiægge had a daughter called Gudrun; and at last it was agreed upon between the parties that the king should take her in marriage. When the wedding-day came King Olaf and Gudrun went to bed together. As soon as Gudrun, the first night they lay together, thought the king was asleep, she drew a knife, with which she intended to run him through; but the king saw it, took the knife from her, got out of bed, and went to his men, and told them what had happened. Gudrun also took her clothes, and went away along with all her men who had followed her thither. Gudrun never came into the king's bed again.

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The same autumn King Olaf laid the keel of a great long-ship out on the strand at the river Nid. It was a snække\*; and he employed many carpenters upon her, so that early in winter the vessel was ready. It had thirty benches for rowers, was high in stem and stern, but was not broad. The king called this ship the Crane. After Jernskiægge's death his body was carried to Yriar, and lies there in the Skiægge mound on Osteraad.

CHAPTER  
LXXIX.  
Building  
of the ship  
Crane.

When King Olaf Tryggvesson had been two years king of Norway, there was a Saxon priest in his house who was called Thangbrand, a passionate, ungovernable man, and a great man-slayer; but he was a good scholar, and a clever man. The king would not have him in his house upon account of his misdeeds; but gave him the errand to go to Iceland, and bring that land to the Christian faith. The king gave him a merchant vessel; and, as far as we know of this voyage

CHAPTER  
LXXX.  
Thang-  
brand the  
priest goes  
to Iceland.

\* A snække appears to have been a denomination of one class of long-ships or ships of war. The word snek is still used in the north of Scotland for quick, nimble; and the word snekka probably denoted the qualities we understand by a cutter or fast vessel. A dragon appears to have been applied to a heavier class of ships of war. The ships of burden, last-ships, appear to have been built on a different model.



## SAGA VI.

of his, he landed first in Iceland at Ostfiord, in the southern Alftafiord, and passed the winter in the house of Hall of Sidu. Thangbrand proclaimed Christianity in Iceland, and on his persuasion Hall and all his house-people, and many other chiefs, allowed themselves to be baptized; but there were many more who spoke against it. Thorvald Veile and Veterlid the scald composed a satire about Thangbrand; but he killed them both outright. Thangbrand was two years in Iceland, and was the death of three men before he left it.

CHAPTER  
LXXXI.  
Of Sigurd  
and Hauk.

There was a man called Sigurd, and another called Hauk, both of Halogaland, who often made merchant voyages. One summer they had made a voyage westward to England; and when they came back to Norway they sailed northwards along the coast, and at North Möre they met King Olaf's people. When it was told the king that some Halogaland people were come who were heathen, he ordered the steersmen to be brought to him, and he asked them if they would consent to be baptized; to which they replied, no. The king spoke with them in many ways, but to no purpose. He then threatened them with death and torture; but they would not allow themselves to be moved. He then had them laid in irons, and kept them in chains in his house for some time, and often conversed with them, but in vain. At last one night they disappeared, without any man being able to conjecture how they got away. But about harvest they came north to Harek of Thiottö, who received them kindly, and with whom they stopped all winter, and were hospitably entertained.

CHAPTER  
LXXXII.  
Of Harek  
of Thiottö.

It happened one good-weather day in spring that Harek was at home in his house with only few people, and time hung heavy on his hands. Sigurd asked him if he would row a little for amusement. Harek was willing; and they went to the shore, and drew

down a six-oared skiff; and Sigurd took the mast and rigging belonging to the boat out of the boat-house, for they often used to sail when they went for amusement on the water. Harek went out into the boat to hang the rudder. The brothers Sigurd and Hauk, who were very strong men, were fully armed, as they were used to go about at home among the peasants. Before they went out to the boat they threw into her some butter-kits and a bread-chest, and carried between them a great keg of ale. When they had rowed a short way from the island the brothers hoisted the sail, while Harek was seated at the helm; and they sailed away from the island. Then the two brothers went aft to where Harek the bonder was sitting; and Sigurd says to him, "Now thou must choose one of these conditions, — first, that we brothers direct this voyage; or, if not, that we bind thee fast and take the command; or, third, that we kill thee." Harek saw how matters stood with him. As a single man, he was not better than one of those brothers, even if he had been as well armed; so it appeared to him wisest to let them determine the course to steer, and bound himself by oath to abide by this condition. On this Sigurd took the helm, and steered south along the land, the brothers taking particular care that they did not encounter people. The wind was very favourable; and they held on sailing along until they came south to Drontheim and to Nidaros, where they found the king. Then the king called Harek to him, and in a conference desired him to be baptized. Harek made objections; and although the king and Harek talked over it many times, sometimes in the presence of other people, and sometimes alone, they could not agree upon it. At last the king says to Harek, "Now thou mayst return home, and I will do thee no injury; partly because we are related together, and partly that thou mayst not have it to say that I caught thee



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by a trick: but know for certain that I intend to come north next summer to visit you Halogalanders, and ye shall then see if I am not able to punish those who reject Christianity." Harek was well pleased to get away as fast as he could. King Olaf gave Harek a good boat of ten or twelve pair of oars, and let it be fitted out with the best of every thing needful; and besides he gave Harek thirty men, all lads of mettle, and well appointed.

CHAPTER  
LXXXIII.  
Eyvind  
Kinnrif's  
death.

Harek of Thiottö went away from the town as fast as he could; but Hauk and Sigurd remained in the king's house, and both took baptism. Harek pursued his voyage until he came to Thiottö. He sent immediately a message to his friend Eyvind Kinnrif, with the word that he had been with King Olaf; but would not let himself be cowed down to accept Christianity. The message at the same time informed him that King Olaf intended coming to the north in summer against them, and they must be at their posts to defend themselves; it also begged Eyvind to come and visit him, the sooner the better. When this message was delivered to Eyvind, he saw how very necessary it was to devise some counsel to avoid falling into the king's hands. He set out, therefore, in a light vessel with a few hands as fast as he could. When he came to Thiottö he was received by Harek in the most friendly way, and they immediately entered into conversation with each other behind the house. When they had spoken together but a short time, King Olaf's men, who had secretly followed Harek to the north, came up, and took Eyvind prisoner, and carried him away to their ship. They did not halt on their voyage until they came to Drontheim, and presented themselves to King Olaf at Nidaros. Then Eyvind was brought up to a conference with the king, who asked him to allow himself to be baptized, like other people; but Eyvind decidedly answered he would not. The

king still, with persuasive words, urged him to accept Christianity, and both he and the bishop used many suitable arguments; but Eyvind would not allow himself to be moved. The king offered him gifts and great fiefs, but Eyvind refused all. Then the king threatened him with tortures and death, but Eyvind was steadfast. Then the king ordered a pan of glowing coals to be placed upon Eyvind's belly, which burst asunder. Eyvind cried, "Take away the pan, and I will say something before I die," which also was done. The king said, "Wilt thou now, Eyvind, believe in Christ?" "No," said Eyvind, "I can take no baptism; for I am an evil spirit put into a man's body by Lapland sorcery, because in no other way could my father and mother have a child." With that died Eyvind, who had been one of the greatest sorcerers.

The spring after King Olaf fitted out and manned his ships, and commanded himself his ship the Crane. He had many and smart people with him; and when hew as ready, he sailed northwards with his fleet past Byrd Isle, and to Halogaland. Wheresoever he came to the land, or to the islands, he held a Thing, and told the people to accept the right faith, and to be baptized. No man dared to say any thing against it, and the whole country he passed through was made Christian. King Olaf was a guest in the house of Harek of Thiottö, who was baptized with all his people. At parting the king gave Harek good presents; and he entered into the king's service, and got fiefs, and the privileges of lendsman from the king.

There was a bonder, by name Raud the Strong, who dwelt in Godö Isle in Salten fiord. Raud was a very rich man, who had many house servants; and likewise was a powerful man, who had many Laplanders in his service when he wanted them. Raud was a great idolater, and very skilful in witchcraft, and was a great friend of Thorér Hiort, before spoken of. Both

CHAPTER  
LXXXIV.  
Haloga-  
land made  
Christian.

CHAPTER  
LXXXV.  
Thorér  
Hiort's  
death.



## SAGA VI.

were great chiefs. Now when they heard that King Olaf was coming with a great force from the south to Halogaland, they gathered together an army, ordered out ships, and they too had a great force on foot. Raud had a large ship, with a gilded head formed like a dragon, which ship had thirty rowing benches, and even for that kind of ship was very large. Thorer Hiort had also a large ship. These men sailed southwards with their ships against King Olaf, and as soon as they met gave gattle. A great battle there was, and a great fall of men; but principally on the side of the Halogalanders, whose ships were cleared of men, so that a great terror came upon them. Raud rowed with his dragon out to sea, and set sail. Raud had always a fair wind wheresoever he wished to sail, which came from his arts of witchcraft; and, to make a short story, he came home to Godö Isle. Thorer Hiort fled from the ships up to the land; but King Olaf landed people, followed those who fled, and killed them. Usually the king was the foremost in such skirmishes, and was so now. When the king saw where Thorer Hiort, who was quicker on foot than any man, was running to, he ran after him with his dog Vig. The king said, "Vig! Vig! catch Hiorten."\* Vig ran straight in upon him; on which Thorer halted, and the king threw a spear at him. Thorer struck with his sword at the dog, and gave him a great wound; but at the same moment the king's spear flew under Thorer's arm, and went through and through him, and came out at his other side. There Thorer left his life; but Vig was carried wounded to the ships.

CHAPTER  
LXXXVI.  
King Olaf's  
voyage to  
Godö.

King Olaf gave life and freedom to all the men who asked it and agreed to become Christian. King Olaf sailed with his fleet northwards along the coast, and

\* Hiorten signifies the deer or hart.

baptized all the people among whom he came; and when he came north to Salten fiord\*, he intended to sail into it to look for Raud, but a dreadful tempest and storm was raging in the fiord. They lay there a whole week, in which the same weather was raging within the fiord; while without there was a fine brisk wind only, fair for proceeding north along the land. Then the king continued his voyage north to Omd, in Hind island, where all the people submitted to Christianity. Then the king turned about and sailed to the south again; but when he came to the north side of Salten fiord, the same tempest was blowing, and the sea ran high out from the fiord, and the same kind of storm prevailed for several days while the king was lying there. Then the king applied to Bishop Sigurd, and asked him if he knew any counsel about it; and the bishop said he would try if God would give him power to conquer these arts of the Devil.

Bishop Sigurd took all his mass robes and went forward to the bow of the king's ship; ordered tapers to be lighted, and incense to be brought out. Then he set the crucifix upon the stem of the vessel, read the Evangelist and many prayers, besprinkled the whole ship with holy water, and then ordered the ship-tent to be stowed away, and to row into the fiord. The king ordered all the other ships to follow him. Now when all was ready on board the Crane to row, she went into the fiord without the rowers finding any wind; and the sea was curled about their keel track like as in a calm, so

CHAPTER  
LXXXVII.  
Of Bishop  
Sigurd, and  
of Raud's  
being tor-  
tured.

\* The Salten fiord is more celebrated in the north of Norway, and more dreaded, than the famous Maelstrom. It is a large fiord within; but the throat through which the vast mass of water has to run in and out at flood and ebb is so narrow, that it makes a very heavy and dangerous race or roost for many miles out in the sea, especially in ebb, when the whole body of water is returning to the ocean. The stream can only be crossed during a few minutes at still water, when flood or ebb has not begun to run, unless at a great distance from the jaws of this singular gulph.



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quiet and still was the water; yet on each side of them the waves were lashing up so high that they hid the sight of the mountains. And so the one ship followed the other in the smooth sea track; and they proceeded this way the whole day and night, until they reached Godö Isle. Now when they came to Raud's house his great ship, the dragon, was afloat close to the land. King Olaf went up to the house immediately with his people; made an attack on the loft in which Raud was sleeping, and broke it open. The men rushed in: Raud was taken and bound, and of the people with him some were killed and some made prisoners. Then the king's men went to a lodging in which Raud's house servants slept, and killed some, bound others, and beat others. Then the king ordered Raud to be brought before him, and offered him baptism. "And," says the king, "I will not take thy property from thee, but rather be thy friend, if thou wilt make thyself worthy to be so." Raud exclaimed with all his might against the proposal, saying he would never believe in Christ, and making his scoff of God. Then the king was wroth, and said Raud should die the worst of deaths. And the king ordered him to be bound to a beam of wood, with his face uppermost, and a round pin of wood to be set between his teeth to force his mouth open. Then the king ordered an adder to be stuck into the mouth of him; but the serpent would not go into his mouth, but shrunk back when Raud breathed against it. Now the king ordered a hollow branch of an angelica root to be stuck into Raud's mouth; others say the king put his horn into his mouth, and forced the serpent to go in by holding a red hot-iron before the opening. So the serpent crept into the mouth of Raud and down his throat, and gnawed its way out of his side; and thus Raud perished. King Olaf took here much gold and silver, and other property of weapons, and

many sorts of precious effects; and all the men who were with Raud he either had baptized, or if they refused had them killed or tortured. Then the king took the dragon-ship which Raud had owned, and steered it himself; for it was a much larger and handsomer vessel than the Crane. In front it had a dragon's head, and aft a crook, which turned up, and ended with the figure of the dragon's tail. The carved work on each side of the stem and stern was gilded. This ship the king called the Serpent. When the sails were hoisted they represented, as it were, the dragon's wings; and the ship was the handsomest in all Norway. The islands on which Raud dwelt were called Gilling and Hæring; but the whole islands together were called Godö Isles, and the current between the isles and the mainland the Godö Stream. King Olaf baptized the whole people of the fiord, and then sailed southwards along the land; and on this voyage happened much and various things, which are set down in tales and sagas,—namely, how witches and evil spirits tormented his men, and sometimes himself; but we will rather write about what occurred when King Olaf made Norway Christian, or in the other countries in which he advanced Christianity. The same autumn Olaf with his fleet returned to Drontheim, and landed at Nidaros, where he took up his winter abode. What I am now going to write about concerns the Icelanders.

Kiartan Olafsson, a son's son of Hoskuld, and a daughter's son of Egil Skalagrimson, came the same autumn from Iceland to Nidaros, and he was considered to be the most agreeable and hopeful man of any born in Iceland. There was also Haldor, a son of Gudmund of Modrovald; and Kolbein, a son of Thord, Frey's godar, and a brother's son of Brenno-Flose; together with Swerting, a son of the godar Runolf. All these were heathens; and besides them there were many more,—some men of power, others



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common men of no property. There came also from Iceland considerable people, who, by Thangbrand's help, had been made Christians; namely, Gissur White, a son of Teit Retilbiornson; and his mother was Alöfa, daughter of Herse Bodvar who was the viking Kare's son. Bodvar's brother was Sigurd father of Eric Biodascalla whose daughter Astrid was King Olaf's mother. Hialte Skeggiason was the name of another Iceland man, who was married to Vilborg, Gissur White's daughter. Hialte was also a Christian; and King Olaf was very friendly to his relations Gissur and Hialte, who lived with him. But the Iceland men who directed the ships, and were heathens, tried to sail away as soon as the king came to the town of Nidaros, for they were told the king forced all men to become Christians; but the wind came stiff against them, and drove them back to Nidarholm. They who directed the ships were Thorarin Nefiulsson, the scald Halfred Ottarson, Brand the Generous, and Thorleik Brand's son. It was told the king that there were Icelanders with ships there, and all were heathen, and wanted to fly from a meeting with the king. Then the king sent them a message forbidding them to sail, and ordering them to bring their ships up to the town, which they did, but without discharging the cargoes. They carried on their dealings and held a market at the king's pier. In spring they tried three times to slip away, but never succeeded; so they continued lying at the king's pier. It happened one fine day that many set out to swim for amusement, and among them was a man who distinguished himself above the others in all bodily exercises. Kiartan challenged Halfred Vandrædaskald to try himself in swimming against this man, but he declined it. "Then will I make a trial," said Kiartan, casting off his clothes, and springing into the water. Then he set after the man, seizes hold of his foot, and dives with him under water. They come up again, and without speaking

a word dive again, and are much longer under water than the first time. They come up again, and without saying a word dive a third time, until Kiartan thought it was time to come up again, which, however, he could in no way accomplish, which showed sufficiently the difference in their strength. They were under water so long that Kiartan was almost drowned. They then came up, and swam to land. This Northman asked what the Iclander's name was. Kiartan tells his name.

He says, "Thou art a good swimmer; but art thou expert also in other exercises?"

Kiartan replied, that such expertness was of no great value.

The Northman asks, "Why dost thou not inquire of me such things as I have asked thee about?"

Kiartan replies, "It is all one to me who thou art, or what thy name is."

"Then will I," says he, "tell thee: I am Olaf Tryggvesson."

He asked Kiartan much about Iceland, which he answered generally, and wanted to withdraw as hastily as he could; but the king said, "Here is a cloak which I will give thee, Kiartan." And Kiartan took the cloak with many thanks.

When Michaelmas came, the king had high mass sung with great splendour. The Icelanders went there, and listened to the fine singing and the sound of the bells; and when they came back to their ships every man told his opinion of the Christian man's worship. Kiartan expressed his pleasure at it, but most of the others scoffed at it; and it went according to the proverb, "the king has many ears," for this was told to the king. He sent immediately that very day a message to Kiartan to come to him. Kiartan went to the king with some men, and the king received him kindly. Kiartan was a very stout and

CHAPTER  
LXXXIX.  
Of the bap-  
tism of the  
Icelanders.



## SAGA VI.

handsome man, and of ready and agreeable speech. After the king and Kiartan had conversed a little, the king asked him to adopt Christianity. Kiartan replies, that he would not say no to that, if he thereby obtained the king's friendship; and as the king promised him the fullest friendship, they were soon agreed. The next day Kiartan was baptized, together with his relation Bolle Thorleikson, and all their fellow-travellers. Kiartan and Bolle were the king's guests as long as they were in their white baptismal clothes, and the king had much kindness for them. Wherever they came they were looked upon as people of distinction.

CHAPTER  
X C.  
Halfred  
the scald  
baptized.

As King Olaf one day was walking in the street some men met him, and he who went the foremost saluted the king. The king asked the man his name, and he called himself Halfred.

"Art thou the scald?" said the king.

"I can compose poetry," replied he.

"Wilt thou then adopt Christianity, and come into my service?" asked the king.

"If I am baptized," replies he, "it must be on one condition,—that thou thyself art my godfather; for no other will I have."

The king replies, "That I will do." And Halfred was baptized, the king holding him during the baptism.

Afterwards the king said, "Wilt thou enter into my service?"

Halfred replied, "I was formerly in Earl Hakon's court; but now I will neither enter into thine nor into any other service, unless thou promise me it shall never be my lot to be driven away from thee."

"It has been reported to me," said the king, "that thou art neither so prudent nor so obedient as to fulfil my commands."

"In that case," replied Halfred, "put me to death."

"Thou art a scald who composes difficulties," says

the king; "but into my service, Halfred, thou shalt be received." SAGA VI.

Halfred says, "If I am to be named the composer of difficulties\*, what dost thou give me, king, on my name-day?"

The king gave him a sword without a scabbard, and said, "Now compose me a song upon this sword, and let the word sword be in every line of the verses." Halfred sang thus:—

"This sword of swords is my reward.  
For him who knows to wield a sword,  
And with his sword to serve his lord,  
Yet wants a sword, his lot is hard.  
I would I had my good lord's leave  
For this good sword a sheath to choose:  
I'm worth three swords where men swords use,  
But for the sword-sheath now I grieve."

Then the king gave him the scabbard, observing that the word sword was wanting in one line of his strophe. "But there are three swords at least in two other lines," says Halfred. "So it is," replies the king.†—Out of Halfred's lays we have taken the most of the true and faithful accounts that are here related about Olaf Tryggvesson.

The same harvest Thangbrand the priest came back from Iceland to King Olaf, and told the ill success of his journey; namely, that the Icelanders had made lampoons about him; and that some even sought

CHAPTER  
XCI.  
Thang-  
brand the  
priest re-  
turns from  
Iceland.

\* Vandrædascald — the despair of scalds, or the difficult scald.

† From this dialogue, which we may fairly take as a true representation of the tone of conversation, and very likely of the words, between a king and a man of literature or scald in the 10th century, it may be inferred that there was a considerable taste for the compositions of scalds, and for intellectual effort; but that this taste was gratified by the art of verse-making—by the reproduction of words, letters, metres, in difficult technical circumstances—much more than by the spirit of poetry. It is likely that in all ages, and even among individuals, the taste for the simple and natural in poetry is the last, not the first, developed taste. It is the savage who loves frippery in dress, and in what addresses itself to taste.



**SAGA VI.** to kill him, and there was little hope of that country ever being made Christian. King Olaf was so enraged at this, that he ordered all the Icelanders to be assembled by sound of horn, and was going to kill all who were in the town; but Kiartan, Gissur, and Hialte, with the other Icelanders who had become Christians, went to him, and said, "King, thou must not fall from thy word, — that however much any man may irritate thee, thou wilt forgive him if he turn from heathenism and become Christian. All the Icelanders here are willing to be baptized; and through them we may find means to bring Christianity into Iceland: for there are many amongst them, sons of considerable people in Iceland, whose friends can advance the cause; but the priest Thangbrand proceeded there as he did here in the court, with violence and manslaughter, and such conduct the people there would not submit to." The king hearkened to these remonstrances; and all the Iceland men who were there were baptized.

**CHAPTER  
XCII.  
Of King  
Olaf's feats.**

King Olaf was more expert in all exercises than any man in Norway whose memory is preserved to us in sagas; and he was stronger and more agile than most men, and many stories are written down about it. One is, that he ascended the Smalsor Horn\*, and fixed his shield upon the very peak. Another is, that one of his followers had climbed up the peak after him, until he came to where he could neither get up nor down; but the king came to his help, climbed up to him, took him under his arm, and bore him to the flat ground. King Olaf could run across the oars outside of the vessel while his men were rowing the Serpent. He could play with three daggers, so that one was always in the air, and he took the one falling by the handle. He could walk all round upon the

\* Now called Hornelen,—an inaccessible peak or needle on the summit of a mountain in Bremanger.

ship's rails, could strike and cut equally well with both hands, and could cast two spears at once. King Olaf was a very merry frolicsome man; gay and social; had great taste in every thing; was very generous; was very finical in his dress, but in battle he exceeded all in bravery. He was distinguished for cruelty when he was enraged, and tortured many of his enemies. Some he burnt in fire; some he had torn in pieces by mad dogs; some he had mutilated, or cast down from high precipices. On this account his friends were attached to him warmly, and his enemies feared him greatly; and thus he made such a fortunate advance in his undertakings, for some obeyed his will out of the friendliest zeal, and others out of dread.

Leif, a son of Eric Rode, who first settled in Greenland, came this summer from Greenland to Norway; and as he met king Olaf he adopted Christianity, and passed the winter with the king.

Gudrod, a son of Eric Bloodyaxe and Gunhild the Mother of Kings, had been ravaging in the western countries ever since he fled from Norway before the Earl Hakon. But the summer before mentioned, when King Olaf Tryggvesson had ruled four years over Norway, Gudrod came to the country, and had many ships of war with him. He had sailed from England; and when he thought himself near to the Norway coast, he steered south along the land, to the quarter where it was least likely King Olaf would be. Gudrod sailed in this way south to Viken; and as soon as he came to the land began to plunder, to subject the people to him, and to demand that they should accept of him as king. Now as the country people saw that a great army was come upon them, they desired peace and terms. They offered King Gudrod to send a Thing-message over all the country, and to accept of him at the Thing as king, rather than suffer from his army; but they desired delay until a fixed day, while the

SAGA VI.

CHAPTER  
XCIII.  
Of the bap-  
tism of Leif  
Ericsson.

CHAPTER  
XCIV.  
Fall of  
Gudrod,  
the last of  
Eric's and  
Gunhild's  
sons.



## SAGA VI.

token of the Thing's assembling was going round through the land. The king demanded maintenance during the time this delay lasted. The bonders preferred entertaining the king as a guest, by turns, as long as he required it; and the king accepted of the proposal to go about with some of his men as a guest from place to place in the land, while others of his men remained to guard the ships. When King Olaf's relations, Hyrning and Thorgeir, heard of this, they gathered men, fitted out ships, and went northwards to Viken. They came in the night with their men to a place at which King Gudrod was living as a guest, and attacked him with fire and weapons; and there King Gudrod fell, and most of his followers. Of those who were with his ships some were killed, some slipped away and fled to great distances; and now were all the sons of Eric and Gunhild dead.

CHAPTER  
XCV.  
The building of the  
ship Long  
Serpent.

The winter after King Olaf came from Halogaland, he had a great vessel built at Ladehammer\*, which was larger than any ship in the country, and of which the beam-knees are still to be seen. The length of keel that rested upon the grass was seventy-four ells. Thorberg Skafting was the man's name who was the master-builder of the ship; but there were many others besides, — some to fell wood, some to shape it, some to make nails, some to carry timber†; and all that was used was of the best. The ship was both long and broad and high-sided, and strongly timbered. While they were planking the ship, it happened that Thorberg had to go home to his farm upon some urgent

\* Ladehammar, — the knob or point of land below the house of Lade, still known by the same name. Lade is close to Drontheim.

† This division of labour and trades, and this building of a vessel equal in length to a frigate of forty guns, give a curious peep at the civilisation of these pagans in the 10th century, and of the state of the useful arts among them. We need not be surprised that a people who had master-carpenters among them had scalds — the useful and the fine arts keep some kind of pace together.

business ; and as he remained there a long time, the ship was planked up on both sides when he came back. In the evening the king went out, and Thorberg with him, to see how the vessel looked, and every body said that never was seen so large and so beautiful a ship of war. Then the king returned to the town. Early next morning the king returns again to the ship, and Thorberg with him. The carpenters were there before them, but all were standing idle with their arms across. The king asked " what was the matter ? " They said the ship was destroyed ; for somebody had gone from stem to stern, and cut one deep notch after the other down the one side of the planking. When the king came nearer he saw it was so, and said, with an oath, " The man shall die who has thus destroyed the vessel out of envy, if he can be discovered, and I shall bestow a great reward on whoever finds him out."

" I can tell you, king," says Thorberg, " who has done this piece of work."

" I don't think," replies the king, " that any one is so likely to find it out as thou art."

" Thorberg says, " I will tell you, king, who did it. I did it myself."

" The king says, " Thou must restore it all to the same condition as before, or thy life shall pay for it."

Then Thorberg went and chipped the planks until the deep notches were all smoothed and made even with the rest ; and the king and all present declared that the ship was much handsomer on the side of the hull which Thorberg had chipped, and bade him shape the other side in the same way, and gave him great thanks for the improvement. Afterwards Thorberg was the master-builder of the ship until she was entirely finished. The ship was a dragon, built after the one the king had captured in Halogaland ; but this ship was far larger, and more carefully put together in all her parts. The king called this ship



## SAGA VI.

Serpent the Long, and the other Serpent the Short. The long Serpent had thirty-four benches for rowers. The head and the arched tail were both gilt, and the bulwarks were as high as in sea-going ships. This ship was the best and most costly ship ever made in Norway.

CHAPTER  
XCVI.  
Of Earl  
Eric, the  
son of  
Hakon.

Earl Eric, the son of Earl Hakon, and his brother, with many other valiant men their relations, had left the country after Earl Hakon's fall. Earl Eric went eastward to Sweden, to Olaf the Swedish king, and he and his people were well received. King Olaf gave the earl peace and freedom in the land, and great fiefs; so that he could support himself and his men well. Thord Kolbeinsson speaks of this in the verses before given.\* Many people who fled from the country on account of King Olaf Tryggvesson came out of Norway to Earl Eric; and the earl resolved to fit out ships and go a cruising, in order to get property for himself and his people. First he steered to Gotland, and lay there long in summer watching for merchant vessels sailing towards the land, or for vikings. Sometimes he landed and ravaged all round upon the sea-coasts. So it is told in the "Banda-drapa:"—

" Eric, as we have lately heard,  
Has waked the song of shield and sword,—  
Has waked the slumbering storm of shields  
Upon the vikings' water-fields :  
From Gotland's lonely shore has gone  
Far up the land, and battles won ;  
And o'er the sea his name is spread,  
To friends a shield, to foes a dread."

Afterwards Earl Eric sailed south to Vendland, and at Staurin found some viking ships, and gave them battle. Eric gained the victory, and slew the vikings. So it is told in the "Banda-drapa:"—

" Earl Eric, he who stoutly wields  
The battle-axe in storm of shields,

---

\* In the verses given in Chapter 57. of this Saga.

With his long-ships surprised the foe  
 At Staurin, and their strength laid low.  
 Many a corpse floats round the shore ;  
 The strand with dead is studded o'er ;  
 The raven tears their sea-bleached skins —  
 The land thrives well when Eric wins."

SAGA VI.  
—

Earl Eric sailed back to Sweden in autumn, and staid there all winter ; but in spring he fitted out his war force again, and sailed up the Baltic. When he came to Valdemar's dominions he began to plunder and kill the inhabitants, and burn the dwellings every where as he came along, and to lay waste the country. He came to Aldeigioburg\*, and besieged it until he took the castle ; and he killed many people, broke down and burned the castle, and then carried destruction all around far and wide in Russia. So it is told in the "Banda-drapa :"—

CHAPTER  
 XCVII.  
 Earl Eric's  
 foray on  
 the Baltic  
 coasts.

" The generous earl, brave and bold,  
 Who scatters his bright shining gold,  
 Eric, with fire-scattering hand,  
 Wasted the Russian monarch's land,—  
 With arrow-shower, and storm of war,  
 Wasted the land of Waldemar.  
 Aldeigia burns, and Eric's might  
 Scours through all Russia by its light."

Earl Eric was five years in all on this foray ; and when he returned from Russia he ravaged all Adal-syssel and Eysyssel†, and took there four viking ships from the Danes, and killed every man on board. So it is told in the "Banda-drapa :"—

" Among the isles flies round the word,  
 That Eric's blood-devouring sword  
 Has flashed like fire in the Sound,  
 And wasted all the land around.

---

\* Aldeigioborg is the town at Aldeigia or the Ladoga lake, and is supposed to be the present town of Notaburg, on an island in this lake.

† Estland was the country along the Gulph of Finland, as far west as the Vistula ; and Eysyssel was the district of the islands of Osel and others along this coast. Adalsyssel was the district on the main-land opposite to Eysyssel.



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And Eric too, the bold in fight,  
 Has broken down the robber-might  
 Of four great vikings, and has slain  
 All of the crew — nor spared one Dane.  
 In Gotland he has seized the town,  
 In Syssels harried up and down;  
 And all the people in dismay  
 Fled to the forests far away.  
 By land or sea, in field or wave,  
 What can withstand this earl brave?  
 All fly before his fiery hand —  
 God save the earl, and keep the land.”

When Eric had been a year in Sweden he went over to Denmark to King Swend the Forked-bearded, the Danish king, and courted his daughter Gyda. The proposal was accepted, and Earl Eric married Gyda; and a year after they had a son, who was called Hakon. Earl Eric was in the winter in Denmark, or sometimes in Sweden; but in summer he went a cruising.

The Danish king, Swend Forked Beard \*, was married

CHAPTER  
XCVIII.

King  
Swend's  
marriage.

\* Sweinn or Swend Forked Beard (Tiuguskegg) was the conqueror of England, and father of Canute the Great. We retain the word *swein* in *swain*, *boatswain*, *coxswain*, and other words, in the same signification as *swein* and *swend* have in the northern languages. He was the son of King Harald Gormson, whose father, Gorm the Old, was the first sole king of Denmark. Gorm the Old, Harald Haarfager, and Eric Emundsson of Sweden, were contemporaries, and three remarkable men, who, about the middle of the 9th century, got the supreme power in their respective dominions, and put down the small kings. Eric the Victorious, a grandson of Eric Emundsson, gained a battle at Fyrisvol, near Upsal, in 983, against his brother's son, Styrbiorn the Strong, who was aided by Harald Gormson of Denmark; and in the war which ensued between Sweden and Denmark, Swein, Harald's son, was driven from his kingdom. Eric's first wife was Sigrid the Haughty. He divorced her after she had a son by him called Olaf. This Olaf, called Olaf the Swede, and the Lap-king, from having been king while still in his nurse's lap, was the Olaf of whom so much is related in the Saga of Saint Olaf. This Sigrid, the same who burnt Harald Grænske, and whom Olaf Tryggvesson insulted by striking her with his glove, married Swein, who recovered back his kingdom by this marriage from his stepson, Olaf the Swede. According to the saga, this Sigrid's desire of revenge for the insult she had received from Olaf Tryggvesson occasioned the combination which defeated and slew Olaf. The peace, established by this marriage between Sweden and Denmark, enabled Swein to leave his dominions and make war in England. Olaf the Swede died in 1024, and was the first Christian king of Sweden.

SAGA VI.

to Gunhild, a daughter of Burislaf king of the Vends. But in the times we have just been speaking of it happened that Queen Gunhild fell sick, and died. Soon after King Swend married Sigrid the Haughty, a daughter of Skoglar Toste, and mother of the Swedish king Olaf; and by means of this relationship there was great friendship between the kings and Earl Eric, Hakon's son.

CHAPTER  
XCIX.  
King  
Burislaf's  
marriage.

Burislaf, the king of the Vends, complained to his relation Earl Sigvald, that the agreement was broken which Sigvald had made between King Swend and King Burislaf, by which Burislaf was to get in marriage Thyri, Harald's daughter, a sister of King Swend: but that marriage had not proceeded, for Thyri had given a positive no to the proposal to marry her to an old and heathen king. "Now," said King Burislaf to Earl Sigvald, "I must have the promise fulfilled." And he told Earl Sigvald to go to Denmark, and bring him Thyri as his queen. Earl Sigvald loses no time, but goes to King Swend of Denmark; explains to him the case; and brings it so far by his persuasion, that the king delivered his sister Thyri into his hands. With her went some female attendants, and her foster-father, by name Otsur Aakeson, a man of great power, and some other people. In the agreement between the king and the earl, it was settled that Thyri should have in property the possessions which Queen Gunhild had enjoyed in Vendland, besides other great properties as bride-gifts. Thyri wept sorely, and went very unwillingly. When the earl came to Vendland, Burislaf held his wedding with Queen Thyri, and received her in marriage; but as long as she was among heathens she would neither eat nor drink with them, and this lasted for seven days.

It happened one night that Queen Thyri and Otsur ran away in the dark, and into the woods, and, to be short in our story, came at last to Denmark. But

CHAPTER  
C.  
King Olaf  
gets Thyri  
in mar-  
riage.



## SAGA VI.

there Thyri did not dare to remain, knowing that if her brother King Swend heard of her, he would send her back directly to Vendland. She went on, therefore, secretly to Norway, and never stayed her journey until she fell in with King Olaf, by whom she was kindly received. Thyri related to the king her sorrows, and entreated his advice in her need, and protection in his kingdom. Thyri was a well-spoken woman, and the king had pleasure in her conversation. He saw she was a handsome woman, and it came into his mind that she would be a good match; so he turns the conversation that way, and asks if she will marry him. Now, as she saw that her situation was such that she could not help herself, and considered what a luck it was for her to marry so celebrated a man, she bade him to dispose himself of her hand and fate; and, after nearer conversation, King Olaf took Thyri in marriage. This wedding was held in harvest, after the king returned from Halogaland; and King Olaf and Queen Thyri remained all winter at Nidaros. The following spring Queen Thyri complained often to King Olaf, and wept bitterly over it, that she who had so great property in Vendland had no goods or possessions here in the country that were suitable for a queen; and sometimes she would entreat the king with fine words to get her property restored to her, and saying that King Burislaf was so great a friend of King Olaf that he would not deny King Olaf any thing if they were to meet. But when King Olaf's friends heard of such speeches, they dissuaded him from any such expedition. It is related that the king one day early in spring was walking in the street, and met a man in the market with many, and, for that early season, remarkably large angelica roots. The king took a great stalk of the angelica in his hand, and went home to Queen Thyri's lodging. Thyri sat in her

SAGA VI.

room weeping as the king came in. The king said, "See here, queen, is a great angelica stalk, which I give thee." She threw it away, and said "A greater present Harald Gormson gave to my mother; and he was not afraid to go out of the land and take his own. That was shown when he came here to Norway, and laid waste the greater part of the land, and seized on all the scatt and revenues; and thou darest not go across the Danish dominions for this brother of mine, King Swend." As she spoke thus, King Olaf sprang up, and answered with a loud oath, "Never did I fear thy brother King Swend; and if we meet he shall give way before me!"

Soon after the king convoked a Thing in the town, and proclaimed to all the public, that in summer he would go abroad upon an expedition out of the country, and would raise both ships and men from every district; and at the same time fixed how many ships he would have from the whole Drontheim fiord. Then he sent his message-token south and north, both along the sea coast and up in the interior of the country, to let an army be gathered. The king ordered the Long Serpent to be put into the water, along with all his other ships both small and great. He himself steered the Long Serpent. When the crews were taken out for the ships, they were so carefully selected that no man on board the Long Serpent was older than sixty or younger than twenty years, and all were men distinguished for strength and courage. Those who were Olaf's body-guard were in particular chosen men, both of the country and foreigners\*, and the boldest and strongest.

Ulf Rode was the name of the man who bore King Olaf's banner, and was in the forecastle of the Long Serpent; and with him was Kiolbiorn the marshal,

CHAPTER  
CI.  
Olaf's levy  
for war.

CHAPTER  
CII.  
The crew  
on board  
of the Long  
Serpent.

\* Foreigners were kept in pay even at that time in the body-guard of the kings.



## SAGA VI.

and Vikar of Tiundaland, and Thorstein Oxefod, brothers of Arnliot Gellina. By the bulkhead next the forecastle were Vakur Elfski Raumason, Birse Bollason the Strong, An Skyti from Jemteland, Thrand Rame from Thelemark, and his brother Uthyrmer. Besides these, were, of Halogaland men, Thrand Skialge and Ogmund Sandi, Lodver Lang from Saltvig, and Harek Huase; together with these Drontheim men — Ketil Hane, Thorfin Eisli, Haavard and his brothers from Orkadal. The following were in the fore-hold: Biorn from Studlo, Bork from the Fiorde, Thorgrim Thiodolfson from Huin, Asbiorn and Orm, Thord from Mardarlög, Thorstein White from Ofrostad, Arnor from Mære, Halstein and Hauk from the Fiord district, Eyvind Snaker, Berga Bestill, Halkel from Fialer, Olaf Dreng, Arnfin from Sogn, Sigurd Bilde, Einar from Hordaland, and Fin and Ketil from Rogaland, and Griotgard the Brisk. The following were in the hold next the mast: Einar Tambarskelver, who was not reckoned as fully experienced, being only eighteen years old; Halstein Hlifarson, Thorolf, Ivar Smette, and Orm Skoganef. Many other valiant men were in the Serpent, although we cannot tell all their names. In every half division of the hold were eight men, and each and all chosen men; and in the fore-hold were thirty men. It was a common saying among people, that the Long Serpent's crew was as distinguished for bravery, strength, and daring, among other men, as the Long Serpent was distinguished among other ships. Thorkel Nefia, the king's brother, commanded the Short Serpent; and Thorkel Dyrdil and Jostein, the king's mother's brothers, had the Crane; and both these ships were well manned. King Olaf had eleven large ships from Drontheim, besides vessels with twenty rowers' benches, smaller vessels, and provision-vessels.

CHAPTER  
CIII.  
Iceland  
baptized.

When King Olaf had nearly rigged out his fleet in Nidaros, he appointed men over the Drontheim coun-

try in all districts and communities. He also sent to Iceland Gissur White and Hialte Skeggiason, to proclaim Christianity there; and sent with them a priest called Thormod, along with several men in holy orders. But he retained with him, as hostages, four Icelanders whom he thought the most important; namely, Kiartan Olafsson, Haldor Gudmundsson, Kolbein Thordsson, and Swerting Runalfsson. Of Gissur and Hialte's progress, it is related that they came to Iceland before the All-thing, and went to the Thing; and in that Thing Christianity was introduced by law into Iceland, and in the course of the summer all the people were baptized.

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The same spring King Olaf also sent Leif Ericsson to Greenland to proclaim Christianity there, and Leif went there that summer. In the ocean he took up the crew of a ship which had been lost, and who were clinging to the wreck. He also found Vinland the Good; arrived about harvest in Greenland; and had with him for it a priest and other teachers, with whom he went to Brattalid to lodge with his father Eric. People called him afterwards Leif the Lucky: but his father Eric said that his luck and ill luck balanced each other; for if Leif had saved a wreck in the ocean, he had brought a hurtful person with him to Greenland, and that was the priest.\*

CHAPTER  
CIV.  
Greenland  
baptized.

\* There are eight chapters here in Peringskiold's edition of the *Heimskringla* which relate to the discovery of Vinland, and are taken from the *Codex Flatoynensis*, but are not in the manuscripts of the *Heimskringla* known to the Danish antiquaries. They are supposed to have been an interpolation in the manuscript which Peringskiold had before him, but which is not now to be found. That they are an interpolation is manifest, because they have no reference to or connection with the events or personages before them or after them in Snorro's narrative, and interrupt Olaf Tryggvesson's history at the most interesting and important period; but all Snorro's incidents and personages in his episodes reappear and conduce to his story, as in real life, or as in Homer's practice or Horace's precepts of the construction of an epic. This artistical management of his tale is one of the beauties of Snorro's



## SAGA VI.

CHAPTER  
CV.

Earl Rogn-  
vald sends  
messengers  
to King  
Olaf.

The winter after King Olaf had baptized Halogaland, he and Queen Thyri were in Nidaros; and the summer before Queen Thyri had brought King Olaf a boy-child, which was both stout and promising, and was called Harald, after its mother's father. The king and queen loved the infant exceedingly, and rejoiced in the hope that it would grow up and inherit after its father; but it lived barely a year after its birth, which both took much to heart. In that winter were many Icelanders and other clever men in King Olaf's house, as before related. His sister Ingeborg, Tryggve's daughter, was also at the court at that time. She was beautiful in appearance, modest and frank with the people, had a steady manly judgment, and was beloved of all. She was very fond of the Icelanders who were there, but most of Kiartan Olafsson, for he had been longer than the others in the king's house; and he found it always amusing to converse with her, for she had both understanding and cleverness in talk. The king was always gay and full of mirth in his intercourse with the people; and often asked about the manners of the great men and chiefs in the neighbouring countries, when strangers from Denmark or Sweden came to see him. The summer before Halfred Vandrædaskald had come from Gotland, where he had been with Earl Rognvald, Ulf's son, who had lately come to the government of Wester Gotland. Ulf, Rognvald's father, was a brother of Sigrid the Haughty; so that King Olaf the Swede and Earl Rognvald were brother and sister's children. Halfred told Olaf many things about the earl: he said he was an able chief, excellently fitted for governing, generous with money, brave, and

work, and of the internal evidences of its general truth, which will not have escaped the reader's notice. The eight chapters are given in the Appendix.

steady in friendship. Halfred said also that the earl desired much the friendship of King Olaf, and had spoken of making court to Ingeborg, Tryggve's daughter. The same winter came ambassadors from Gotland, and fell in with King Olaf in the north, in Nidaros, and brought the message which Halfred had spoken of, — that the earl desired to be King Olaf's entire friend, and wished to become his brother-in-law by obtaining his sister Ingeborg in marriage. There-with the ambassadors laid before the king sufficient tokens in proof that in reality they came from the earl on this errand. The king listened with approbation to their speech; but said that Ingeborg herself must determine on his assent to the marriage. The king then talked to his sister about the matter, and asked her opinion about it. She answered to this effect, — “ I have been with you for some time, and you have shown brotherly care and tender respect for me ever since you came to the country. I will agree therefore to your proposal about my marriage, provided that you do not marry me to a heathen man.” The king said it should be as she wished. The king then spoke to the ambassadors; and it was settled before they departed that in summer Earl Rognvald should meet the king in the east parts of the country, to enter into the fullest friendship with each other, and when they met they would settle about the marriage. With this reply the earl's messengers went westward, and King Olaf remained all winter in Nidaros in great splendour, and with many people about him.

King Olaf proceeded in summer with his ships and men southwards along the land, and past Stad. With him were Queen Thyri and Ingeborg, Tryggve's daughter, the king's sister. Many of his friends also joined him, and other persons of consequence who had prepared themselves to travel with the king. The

CHAPTER  
CVI.  
King Olaf  
begins his  
expedition  
to Vend-  
land.



## SAGA VI.

first man among these was his brother-in-law, Erling Skialgsson, who had with him a large ship of thirty benches of rowers, and which was in every respect well equipt. His brothers-in-law Hyrning and Thorgeir also joined him, each of whom for himself steered a large vessel; and many other powerful men besides followed him. With all this war-force he sailed southwards along the land; but when he came south as far as Rogaland he stopped there, for Erling Skialgsson had prepared for him a splendid feast at Sole. There Earl Rognvald, Ulf's son, from Gotland, came to meet the king, and to settle the business which had been proposed in winter in the messages between them, namely, the marriage with Ingeborg the king's sister. Olaf received him kindly; and when the matter came to be spoken of, the king said he would keep his word, and marry his sister Ingeborg to him, provided he would accept the true faith, and make all his subjects he ruled over in his land be baptized. The earl agreed to this, and he and all his followers were baptized. Now was the feast enlarged that Erling had prepared, for the earl held his wedding there with Ingeborg the king's sister. King Olaf had now married off all his sisters. The earl, with Ingeborg, set out on his way home; and the king sent learned men with him to baptize the people in Gotland, and to teach them the right faith and morals. The king and the earl parted in the greatest friendship.

CHAPTER  
CVII.

King  
Olaf's ex-  
pedition to  
Vendland.

After his sister Ingeborg's wedding, the king made ready in all haste to leave the country with his army, which was both great and made up of fine men. When he left the land and sailed southwards he had sixty ships of war, with which he sailed past Denmark, and in through the Sound, and on to Vendland. He appointed a meeting with King Burislaf; and when the kings met, they spoke about the property which King Olaf demanded, and the conference went off peaceably,

as a good account was given of the properties which King Olaf thought himself entitled to there. He passed here much of the summer, and found many of his old friends.

The Danish king, Swend Forked Beard, was married, as before related, to Sigrid the Haughty. Sigrid was King Olaf Tryggvesson's greatest enemy; the cause of which, as before said, was that King Olaf had broken off with her, and had struck her in the face. She urged King Swend much to give battle to King Olaf Tryggvesson; saying that he had reason enough, as Olaf had married his sister Thyri without his leave, "and that your predecessors would not have submitted to." Such persuasions Sigrid had often in her mouth; and at last she brought it so far that Swend resolved firmly on doing so. Early in spring King Swend sent messengers eastward into Sweden, to his brother-in-law Olaf, the Swedish king, and to Earl Eric; and informed them that King Olaf of Norway was levying men for an expedition, and intended in summer to go to Vendland. To this news the Danish king added an invitation to the Swedish king and Earl Eric to meet King Swend with an army, so that all together they might make an attack on King Olaf Tryggvesson. The Swedish king and Earl Eric were ready enough for this, and immediately assembled a great fleet and an army through all Sweden, with which they sailed southwards to Denmark, and arrived there before King Olaf Tryggvesson had sailed to the eastward. Haldor the Unchristian tells of this in his lay on Earl Eric:—

"The king-subduer raised a host  
Of warriors on the Swedish coast.  
The brave went southwards to the fight,  
Who love the sword-storm's gleaming light;  
The brave, who fill the wild wolf's mouth,  
Followed bold Eric to the south;  
The brave, who sport in blood—each one  
With the bold earl to sea is gone."



## SAGA VI.

The Swedish king and Earl Eric sailed to meet the Danish king, and they had all when together an immense force.

CHAPTER  
CIX.  
Earl Sig-  
vald's  
treach-  
erous  
plans.

At the same time that King Swend sent a message to Sweden for an army, he sent Earl Sigvald to Vendland to spy out King Olaf Tryggvesson's proceedings, and to bring it about by cunning devices that King Swend and King Olaf should fall in with each other. So Sigvald sets out to go to Vendland. First, he came to Jomsburg, and then he sought out King Olaf Tryggvesson. There was much friendship in their conversation, and the earl got himself into great favour with the king. Astrid, the earl's wife, King Burislaf's daughter, was a great friend of King Olaf Tryggvesson, particularly on account of the connection which had been between them when Olaf was married to her sister Geira. Earl Sigvald was a prudent, ready-minded man; and as he had got a voice in King Olaf's council, he put him off much from sailing homewards, finding various reasons for delay. Olaf's people were in the highest degree dissatisfied with this; for the men were anxious to get home, and they lay ready to sail, waiting only for a wind. At last Earl Sigvald got a secret message from Denmark that the Swedish king's army was arrived from the east, and that Earl Eric's also was ready; and that all these chiefs had resolved to sail eastwards to Vendland, and wait for King Olaf at an island which is called Svald.\* They also desired the earl to contrive matters so that they should meet King Olaf there.

CHAPTER  
CX.  
King  
Olaf's

There came first a flying report to Vendland that the Danish king, Swend, had fitted out an army; and

\* This island has been somewhere between the south-east end of the Isle of Rugen and the continent; but no such isle now exists, and the antiquary is forced to conjecture it may have been lost in the 14th century, when many changes took place in the coast land of the Baltic.

it was soon whispered that he intended to attack King Olaf. But Earl Sigvald says to King Olaf, "It never can be King Swend's intention to venture with the Danish force alone, to give battle to thee with such a powerful army; but if thou hast any suspicion that evil is on foot, I will follow thee with my force (at that time it was considered a great matter to have Jomsburg vikings with an army), and I will give thee eleven manned ships." The king accepted this offer; and as the light breeze of wind that came was favourable, he ordered the ships to get under weigh, and the war-horns to sound the departure. The sails were hoisted; and all the small vessels, sailing fastest, got out to sea before the others. The earl, who sailed nearest to the king's ship, called to those on board to tell the king to sail in his keel-track: "For I know where the water is deepest between the islands and in the sounds, and these large ships require the deepest." Then the earl sailed first with his eleven ships, and the king followed with his large ships, also eleven in number; but the whole of the rest of the fleet sailed out to sea. Now when Earl Sigvald came sailing close under the island Svald, a skiff rowed out to inform the earl that the Danish king's army was lying in the harbour before them. Then the earl ordered the sails of his vessels to be struck, and they rowed in under the island. Haldor the Unchristian says:—

"From out the south bold Tryggve's son  
With one-and-seventy ships came on,  
To dye his sword in bloody fight,  
Against the Danish foeman's might.  
But the false earl the king betrayed;  
And treacherous Sigvald, it is said,  
Deserted from King Olaf's fleet,  
And basely fled, the Danes to meet."

It is said here that King Olaf and Earl Sigvald had seventy sail of vessels and one more, when they sailed from the south.



SAGA VI.

CHAPTER  
CXI.The consultation of  
the kings.

The Danish king Swend, the Swedish king Olaf, and Earl Eric, were there with all their forces. The weather being fine and clear sunshine, all these chiefs, with a great suite, went out on the isle to see the vessels sailing out at sea, and many of them crowded together; and they saw among them one large and glancing ship. The two kings said, "That is a large and very beautiful vessel: that will be the Long Serpent."

Earl Eric replied, "That is not the Long Serpent." And he was right; for it was a ship belonging to Endric of Grimsar.

Soon after they saw another vessel coming sailing along much larger than the first; then says King Swend, "Olaf Tryggvesson must be afraid, for he does not venture to sail with the figure-head of the dragon upon his ship."

Says Earl Eric, "That is not the king's ship yet; for I know that ship by the coloured stripes of cloth in her sail. That is Erling Skialgsson. Let him sail; for it is the better for us that this ship is away from Olaf's fleet, so well equipt as she is."

Soon after they saw and knew Earl Sigvald's ships, which turned in and laid themselves under the island. Then they saw three ships coming along under sail, and one of them very large. King Swend ordered his men to go to their ships, "for there comes the Long Serpent."

Earl Eric says, "Many other great and stately vessels have they besides the Long Serpent. Let us wait a little."

Then said many, "Earl Eric will not fight and avenge his father; and it is a great shame that it should be told that we lay here with so great a force, and allowed King Olaf to sail out to sea before our eyes."

But when they had spoken thus for a short time,

they saw four ships coming sailing along, of which one had a large dragon-head richly gilt. Then King Swend stood up, and said, "That dragon shall carry me this evening high, for I shall steer it."

Then said many, "The Serpent is indeed a wonderfully large and beautiful vessel, and it shows a great mind to have built such a ship."

Earl Eric said so loud that several persons heard him, "If King Olaf had no other vessels but only that one, King Swend would never take it from him with the Danish force alone."

Thereafter all the people rushed on board their ships, took down the tents\*, and in all haste made ready for battle.

While the chiefs were speaking among themselves as above related, they saw three very large ships coming sailing along, and at last after them a fourth, and that was the Long Serpent. Of the large ships which had gone before, and which they had taken for the Long Serpent, the first was the Crane; the one after that was the Short Serpent; and when they really saw the Long Serpent all knew, and nobody had a word to say against it, that it must be Olaf Tryggvesson who was sailing in such a vessel; and they went to their ships to arm for the fight.

An agreement had been concluded among the chiefs, King Swend, King Olaf the Swede, and Earl Eric, that they should divide Norway among them in three parts, in case they succeeded against Olaf Tryggvesson; but that he of the chiefs who should first board the Serpent should have her, and all the booty found in her, and each should have the ships he cleared for himself. Earl Eric had a large ship of war which he used upon his viking expeditions; and there was an

\* The ship-tents or tilts, under which the crews appear to have lived when not under sail.



## SAGA VI.

iron beard or comb above on both sides of the stem, and below it a thick iron plate as broad as the combs, which went down quite to the gunnel.\*

CHAPTER  
CXII.  
Of King  
Olaf's  
people.

When Earl Sigvald with his vessels rowed in under the island, Thorkel Dyrdil of the Crane, and the other ship commanders who sailed with him, saw that he turned his ships towards the isle, and thereupon let fall the sails, and rowed after him, calling out, and asking why he sailed that way. The earl answered, that he was waiting for King Olaf, as he feared there were enemies in the way. They lay upon their oars until Thorkel Nefia came up with the Short Serpent and the three ships which followed him. When they told them the same they too struck sail, and let the ships drive, waiting for King Olaf. But when the king sailed in towards the isle, the whole enemies' fleet came rowing within them out to the Sound. When they saw this they begged the king to hold on his way, and not risk battle with so great a force. The king replied, high on the quarterdeck where he stood, "Strike the sails; never shall men of mine think of flight. I never fled from battle. Let God dispose of my life, but flight I shall never take." It was done as the king commanded. Halfred tells of it thus:—

“ And far and wide the saying bold  
Of the brave warrior shall be told.  
The king, in many a fray well tried,  
To his brave champions round him cried,  
' My men shall never learn from me  
From the dark weapon-cloud to flee.'  
Nor were the brave words spoken then  
Forgotten by his faithful men.”

CHAPTER  
CXIII.  
King  
Olaf's  
ships are  
closed up  
for battle.

King Olaf ordered the war-horns to sound for all his ships to close up to each other. The king's ship lay in the middle of the line, and on one side lay the Little Serpent, and on the other the Crane; and as

\* It seems to have been an iron plate with spikes on the top, all round the stem and sides of the ship, to prevent boarding.

they made fast the stems together\*, the Long Serpent's stem and the short Serpent's were made fast together; but when the king saw it he called out to his men, and ordered them to lay the larger ship more in advance, so that its stern should not lie so far behind in the fleet.

Then says Ulf the Red, "If the Long Serpent is to lie as much more ahead of the other ships as she is longer than them, we shall have hard work of it here on the forecastle."

The king replies, "I did not think I had a forecastle man afraid as well as red."†

Says Ulf, "Defend thou the quarterdeck as I shall the forecastle."

The king had a bow in his hands, and laid an arrow on the string, and aimed at Ulf.

Ulf said, "Shoot another way, king, where it is more needful: my work is thy gain."

King Olaf stood on the Serpent's quarterdeck, high over the others. He had a gilt shield, and a helmet inlaid with gold; over his armour he had a short red coat, and was easy to be distinguished from other men. When King Olaf saw that the scattered forces of the enemy gathered themselves together under the banners of their ships, he asked, "Who is the chief of the force right opposite to us?"

He was answered, that it was King Swend with the Danish army.

The king replies, "We are not afraid of these soft

CHAPTER  
CXIV.  
Of King  
Olaf.

\* The mode of fighting in sea battles appears, from this and many other descriptions, to have been for each party to bind together the stems and sterns of their own ships, forming them thus into a compact body as soon as the fleets came within fighting distance, or within spears' throw. They appear to have fought principally from the forecastles; and to have used grappling-irons for dragging a vessel out of the line, or within boarding distance.

† There is a rhyme or pun here — Raudan oc Ragan. Afraid — Ragan, is similar in alliterative rhyme to Raudan — Red, the name of Ulf; and Raudan oc Ragan make a line of alliterative verse.



## SAGA VI.

Danes, for there is no bravery in them; but who are the troops on the right of the Danes?"

He was answered, that it was King Olaf with the Swedish forces.

"Better it were," says King Olaf, "for these Swedes to be sitting at home killing their sacrifices, than to be venturing under our weapons from the Long Serpent. But who owns the large ships on the larboard side of the Danes?"

"That is Earl Eric Hakonson," say they.

The king replies, "He, methinks, has good reason for meeting us; and we may expect the sharpest conflict with these men, for they are Norsemen like ourselves."

CHAPTER  
CXV.  
The battle  
begins.

The kings now laid out their oars, and prepared to attack. King Swend laid his ship against the Long Serpent. Outside of him Olaf the Swede laid himself, and set his ship's stem against the outermost ship of King Olaf's line; and on the other side lay Earl Eric. Then a hard combat began. Earl Sigvald held back with the oars on his ships, and did not join the fray. So says Skule Thorsteinson, who at that time was with Earl Eric:—

"I followed Sigvald in my youth,  
And gallant Eric; and in truth,  
Tho' now I am grown stiff and old,  
In the spear-song I once was bold.  
Where arrows whistled on the shore  
Of Swalder fiord my shield I bore,  
And stood amidst the loudest clash  
When swords on shields made fearful crash."

And Halfred also sings thus:—

"In truth, I think the gallant king,  
Midst such a foemen's gathering,  
Would be the better of some score  
Of his tight Drontheim lads, or more;  
For many a chief has run away,  
And left our brave king in the fray,

Two great kings' power to withstand,  
 And one great earl's, with his small band.  
 The king who dares such mighty deed  
 A hero for his scald would need."

SAGA VI.  

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CHAPTER  
 CXVI.  
 Flight of  
 King  
 Swend  
 and King  
 Olaf the  
 Swede.

This battle was one of the severest told of, and many were the people slain. The forecastle men of the Long Serpent, the Little Serpent, and the Crane, threw grapplings and stem chains into King Swend's ship, and used their weapons well against the people standing below them, for they cleared the decks of all the ships they could lay fast hold of; and King Swend, and all the men who escaped, fled to other vessels, and laid themselves out of bow-shot. It went with this force just as King Olaf Tryggvesson had foreseen. Then King Olaf the Swede laid himself in their place; but when he came near the great ships it went with him as with them, for he lost many men and some ships, and was obliged to get away. But Earl Eric laid the Iron Beard side by side with the outermost of King Olaf's ships, thinned it of men, cut the cables, and let it drive. Then he laid alongside of the next, and fought until he had cleared it of men also. Now all the people who were in the smaller ships began to run into the larger, and the earl cut them loose as fast as he cleared them of men. The Danes and Swedes laid themselves now out of shooting distance all around Olaf's ship; but Earl Eric lay always close alongside of the ships, and used his swords and battle-axes, and as fast as people fell in his vessel others, Danes and Swedes, came in their place. So says Haldor:—

"Sharp was the clang of shield and sword,  
 And shrill the song of spears on board,  
 And whistling arrows thickly flew  
 Against the Serpent's gallant crew.  
 And still fresh foemen, it is said,  
 Earl Eric to her long side led;  
 Whole armies of his Danes and Swedes,  
 Wielding on high their blue sword-blades."

Then the fight became most severe, and many



## SAGA VI.

people fell. But at last it came to this, that all King Olaf Tryggvesson's ships were cleared of men except the Long Serpent, on board of which all who could still carry their arms were gathered. Then Iron Beard lay side by side with the Serpent, and the fight went on with battle-axe and sword. So says Haldor:—

“ Hard pressed on ever side by foes,  
The Serpent reels beneath the blows;  
Crash go the shields around the bow!  
Breat-plates and breasts pierced thro' and thro'!  
In the sword-storm the Holm beside,  
The Iron Beard lay alongside  
The king's Long Serpent of the sea —  
Fate gave the earl the victory.”

CHAPTER  
CXVII.  
Of Earl  
Eric.

Earl Eric was in the forehold of his ship, where a cover of shields\* had been set up. In the fight, both hewing weapons, sword, and axe, and the thrust of spears had been used; and all that could be used as weapon for casting was cast. Some used bows, some threw spears with the hand. So many weapons were cast into the Serpent, and so thick flew spears and arrows, that the shields could scarcely receive them; for on all sides the Serpent was surrounded by war ships. Then King Olaf's men became so mad with rage, that they ran on board of the enemies' ships, to get at the people with stroke of sword and kill them; but many did not lay themselves so near the Serpent, in order to escape the close encounter with battle-axe or sword; and thus the most of Olaf's men went overboard and sank under their weapons, thinking they were fighting on plain ground. So says Halfred:—

\* Both in land and sea fights the commanders appear to have been protected from missile weapons, — stones, arrows, spears, — by a shield-burg; that is, by a party of men bearing shields surrounding them in such a way that the shields were a parapet, covering those within the circle. The Romans had a similar military arrangement of shields in sieges — the testudo.

The daring lads shrink not from death, —  
 O'erboard they leap, and sink beneath  
 The Serpent's keel : all armed they leap,  
 And down they sink five fathoms deep.  
 The foe was daunted at their cheers :  
 The king, who still the Serpent steers,  
 In such a strait — beset with foes —  
 Wanted but some more lads like those."

SAGA VI.  

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Einar Tambarskelver, one of the sharpest of bow-shooters, stood by the mast, and shot with his bow. Einar shot an arrow at Earl Eric, which hit the tiller-end just above the earl's head so hard that it entered the wood up to the arrow-shaft. The earl looked that way, and asked if they knew who had shot; and at the same moment another arrow flew between his hand and his side, and into the stuffing of the chief's stool, so that the barb stood far out on the other side. Then said the earl to a man called Fin,—but some say he was of Finn (Laplander) race, and was a superior archer,—“Shoot that tall man by the mast.” Fin shot; and the arrow hit the middle of Einar's bow just at the moment that Einar was drawing it, and the bow was split in two parts.

CHAPTER  
CXVIII.  
Of Einar  
Tambar-  
skelver.

“What is that,” cried King Olaf, “that broke with such a noise?”

“Norway, king, from thy hands,” cried Einar.

“No! not quite so much as that,” says the king; “take my bow, and shoot,” flinging the bow to him.

Einar took the bow, and drew it over the head of the arrow. “Too weak, too weak,” said he, “for the bow of a mighty king!” and, throwing the bow aside, he took sword and shield, and fought valiantly.

The king stood on the gangways of the Long Serpent, and shot the greater part of the day; sometimes with the bow, sometimes with the spear, and always throwing two spears at once. He looked down over the ship's side, and saw that his men struck briskly with their swords, and yet wounded but seldom. Then he

CHAPTER  
CXIX.  
Olaf gives  
his men  
sharp  
swords.



## SAGA VI.

called aloud, "Why do ye strike so gently that ye seldom cut?" One among the people answered, "The swords are blunt and full of notches." Then the king went down into the forehold, opened the chest under the throne, and took out many sharp swords, which he handed to his men; but as he stretched down his right hand with them, some observed that blood was running down under his steel glove, but no one knew where he was wounded.

CHAPTER  
CXX.  
The  
Serpent  
boarded.

Desperate was the defence in the Serpent, and there was the heaviest destruction of men done by the forecastle crew, and those of the forehold, for in both places the men were chosen men, and the ship was highest; but in the middle of the ship the people were thinned. Now when Earl Eric saw there were but few people remaining beside the ship's mast, he determined to board; and he entered the Serpent with four others. Then came Hyrning, the king's brother-in-law, and some others against him, and there was the most severe combat; and at last the earl was forced to leap back on board the Iron Beard again, and some who had accompanied him were killed, and others wounded. Thord Kolbeinsson alludes to this:—

" On Odin's deck, all wet with blood,  
The helm-adorned hero stood ;  
And gallant Hyrning honour gained,  
Clearing all round with sword deep stained.  
The high Fielde peaks shall fall,  
Ere men forget this to recall."

Now the fight became hot indeed, and many men fell on board the Serpent; and the men on board of her began to be thinned off, and the defence to be weaker. The earl resolved to board the Serpent again, and again he met with a warm reception. When the forecastle men of the Serpent saw what he was doing, they went aft and made a desperate fight; but so many men of the Serpent had fallen, that the

ship's sides were in many places quite bare of defenders; and the earl's men poured in all around into the vessel, and all the men who were still able to defend the ship crowded aft to the king, and arrayed themselves for his defence. So says Haldor the Unchristian:—

“ Eric cheers on his men, —  
 ‘ On to the charge again!’  
 The gallant few  
 Of Olaf’s crew  
 Must refuge take  
 On the quarter-deck.  
 Around the king  
 They stand in ring;  
 Their shields enclose  
 The king from foes,  
 And the few who still remain  
 Fight madly, but in vain.  
 Eric cheers on his men —  
 ‘ On to the charge again!’ ”

Kolbiorn the marshal, who had on clothes and arms like the king's, and was a remarkably stout and handsome man, went up to the king on the quarter-deck. The battle was still going on fiercely even in the forehold.\* But as many of the earl's men had now got into the Serpent as could find room, and his ships lay all round her, and few were the people left in the Serpent for defence against so great a force; and in a short time most of the Serpent's men fell, brave and stout though they were. King Olaf and Kolbiorn the marshal both sprang overboard, each on his own side of the ship; but the earl's men had laid out boats around the Serpent, and killed those who leaped overboard. Now when the king had sprung overboard, they tried to seize him with their hands, and bring

CHAPTER  
 CXXI.  
 The Ser-  
 pent's decks  
 cleared.

\* From the occasional descriptions of vessels in this and other battles, it may be inferred that even the Long Serpent, described in the 95th Chapter as of 150 feet of keel, was only decked fore and aft; the 34 benches for rowers occupying the open area in the middle, and probably gangways running along the sides for communicating from the quarter-deck to the fore-castle.



## SAGA VI.

him to Earl Eric; but King Olaf threw his shield over his head, and sank beneath the waters. Kolbiorn held his shield behind him to protect himself from the spears cast at him from the ships which lay round the Serpent, and he fell so upon his shield that it came under him, so that he could not sink so quickly. He was thus taken and brought into a boat, and they supposed he was the king. He was brought before the earl; and when the earl saw it was Kolbiorn, and not the king, he gave him his life. At the same moment all of King Olaf's men who were in life sprang overboard from the Serpent; and Thorkel Nefia, the king's brother, was the last of all the men who sprang overboard. It is thus told concerning the king by Halfred:—

“ The Serpent and the Crane  
Lay wrecks upon the main.  
On his sword he cast a glance, —  
With it he saw no chance.  
To his marshal, who of yore  
Many a war-chance had come o'er,  
He spoke a word — then drew in breath,  
And sprang to his deep-sea death.”

CHAPTER  
CXXII.  
Of the re-  
port among  
the people  
of the  
island.

Earl Sigvald, as before related, came from Vendland, in company with King Olaf, with ten ships; but the eleventh ship was manned with the men of Astrid, the king's daughter, the wife of Earl Sigvald. Now when King Olaf sprang overboard, the whole army raised a shout of victory; and then Earl Sigvald and his men put their oars in the water and rowed towards the battle. Haldor the Unchristian tells of it thus:—

“ Then first the Vendland vessels came  
Into the fight with little fame;  
The fight still lingered on the wave,  
Tho' hope was gone with Olaf brave.  
War, like a full-fed ravenous beast,  
Still oped her grim jaws for the feast.  
The few who stood now quickly fled,  
When the shout told — ‘ Olaf is dead ! ’ ”

But the Vendland cutter, in which Astrid's men were, rowed back to Vendland; and the report went immediately abroad, and was told by many, that King Olaf had cast off his coat of mail under water, and had swam, diving under the long-ships, until he came to the Vendland cutter, and that Astrid's men had conveyed him to Vendland: and many tales have been made since about the adventures of Olaf the king. Halfred speaks thus about it:—

“ Does Olaf live? or is he dead?  
Has he the hungry ravens fed?  
I scarcely know what I should say,  
For many tell the tale each way.  
This I can say, nor fear to lie,  
That he was wounded grievously,—  
So wounded in this bloody strife,  
He scarce could come away with life.”

But however this may have been, King Olaf Tryggvesson never came back again to his kingdom of Norway. Halfred Vandrædaskald speaks also thus about it:—

“ The witness who reports this thing  
Of Tryggvesson, our gallant king,  
Once served the king, and truth should tell,  
For Olaf hated lies like hell.  
If Olaf 'scaped from this sword-thing,  
Worse fate, I fear, befell our king  
Than people guess, or e'er can know,  
For he was hemm'd in by the foe.  
From the far east some news is rife  
Of king sore wounded saving life;  
His death, too sure, leaves me no care  
For cobweb rumours in the air.  
It never was the will of fate  
That Olaf from such perilous strait  
Should 'scape with life: this truth may grieve—  
' What people wish they soon believe.’ ”

By this victory Earl Eric Hakonson became owner of the Long Serpent, and made a great booty besides; and he steered the Serpent from the battle. So says Haldor:—

“ Olaf, with glittering helmet crowned,  
Had steered the Serpent through the Sound;

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CHAPTER  
CXXIII.  
Of Earl  
Eric the  
son of  
Hakon.



## SAGA VI.

And people dressed their boats, and cheered,  
 As Olaf's fleet in splendour steered.  
 But the descendant of great Hemming,  
 Whose race tells many a gallant sea-king,  
 His blue sword in red life-blood stained,  
 And bravely Olaf's long-ship gained."

Swend, a son of Earl Hakon, and Earl Eric's brother, was engaged at this time to marry Holmfrid, a daughter of King Olaf the Swedish king. Now when Swend the Danish king, Olaf the Swedish king, and Earl Eric divided the kingdom of Norway between them, King Olaf got four districts in the Drontheim country, and also the districts of Möre and Raumsdal; and in the east part of the land he got Ranrige, from the Gotha river to Swinesund. Olaf gave these dominions into Earl Swend's hands, on the same conditions as the sub-kings or earls had held them formerly from the upper-king of the country. Earl Eric got four districts in the Drontheim country, and Halogaland, Naumadal, the Fiord districts, Sogn, Hordaland, Rogaland, and North Agder, all the way to the Naze. So says Thord Kolbeinsson:—

" All chiefs within our land  
 On Eric's side now stand :  
 Erling alone, I know,  
 Remains Earl Eric's foe.  
 All praise our generous earl,—  
 He gives, and is no churl :  
 All men are well content  
 Fate such a chief has sent.  
 From Veg to Agder they,  
 Well pleased, the earl obey ;  
 And all will by him stand,  
 To guard the Norsemen's land.  
 And now the news is spread  
 That mighty Swend is dead,  
 And luck is gone from those  
 Who were the Norsemen's foes."

The Danish king Swend retained Viken as he had held it before, but he gave Raumarike and Hedemark to Earl Eric. Swend Hakonson got the title of earl

from Olaf the Swedish king. Swend was one of the handsomest men ever seen. The earls Eric and Swend both allowed themselves to be baptized, and took up the true faith; but as long as they ruled in Norway they allowed every one to do as he pleased in holding by his Christianity. But, on the other hand, they held fast by the old laws, and all the old rights and customs of the land, and were excellent men and good rulers. Earl Eric had most to say of the two brothers in all matters of government.

SAGA VI.  

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END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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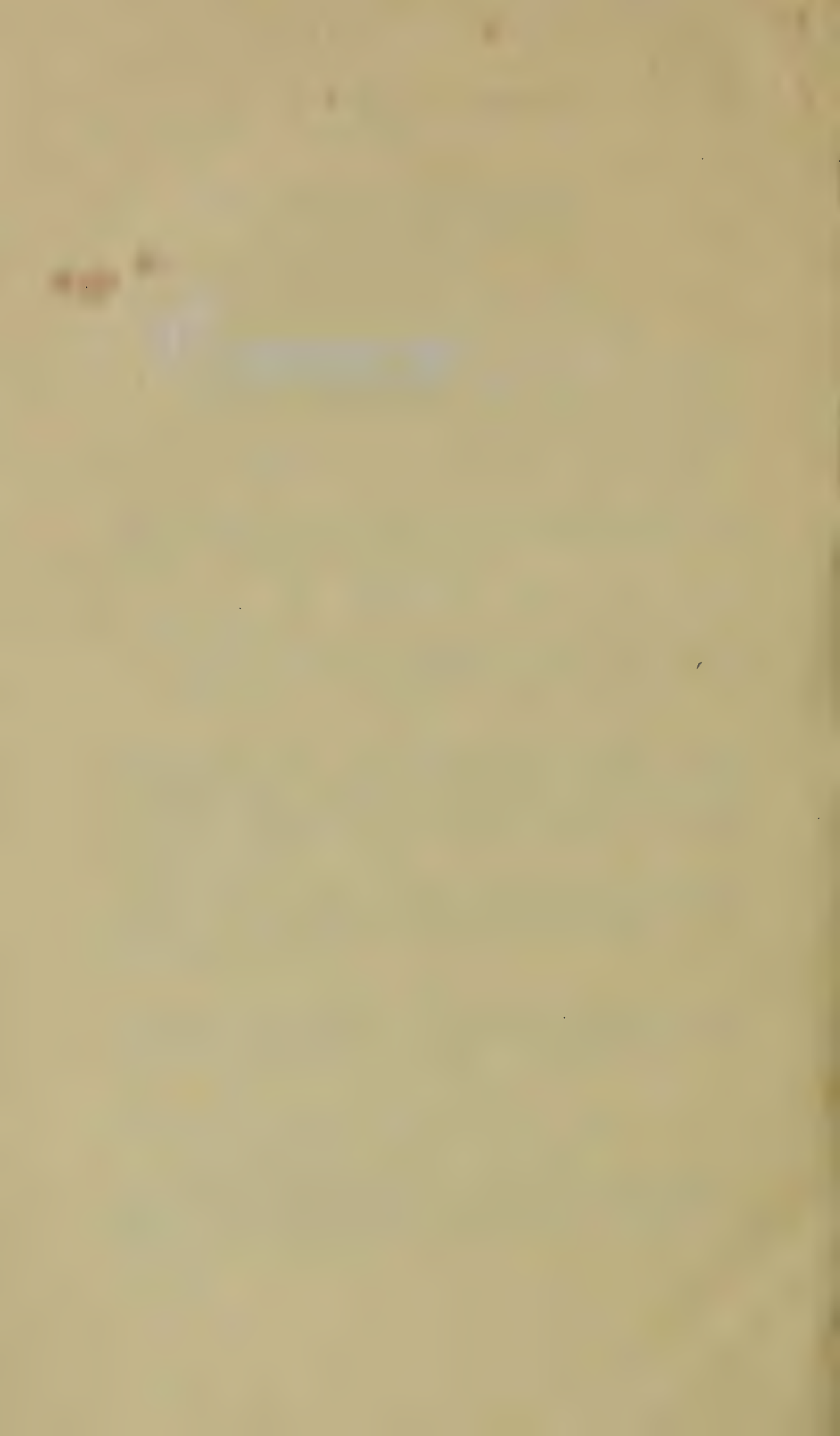
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